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**Hammering the World into Shape: Scottish volunteers in
the International Brigades, 1936–9.**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

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I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Fraser Raeburn

September 2018

Abstract

Over 500 Scots journeyed to Spain to fight on behalf of the Spanish Republic as part of the International Brigades, alongside some 35,000 other foreign volunteers. Their decision to personally intervene in the Spanish Civil War placed these Scots at a crucial juncture in history. They formed part of the single largest mobilisation of transnational foreign fighters in modern history, represented the apex of interwar anti-fascist activism and posed a complex security dilemma for the British state on their return. In examining the Scottish volunteers' decisions and their consequences, this thesis contends that existing historical explanations of the International Brigades' recruitment and organisation have significant limitations. Crucially, previous accounts have failed to appreciate the extent and importance of pre-existing social and political networks among the volunteers, which were facilitated by Scotland's particular political cultures in the interwar period. Moreover, examination of the Scots' time in Spain sheds new light on the International Brigades themselves, including their political organisation, the handling of dissent, desertion and disaffection and the volunteers' relationships with Spanish civilians and conscripts. Finally, the post-civil war trajectories of the Scottish volunteers indicate limitations to enduring popular and historical narratives of their victimisation as 'premature anti-fascists' at the hands of the British state.

Lay Summary

This thesis takes as its subject the Scots who chose to journey to Spain between 1936 and 1938 to fight for the International Brigades. These units were organised by the Communist International to fight for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War (1936–9), forming a key element of Soviet intervention in the conflict, which also saw the large-scale involvement of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Aside from examining an aspect of interwar Scottish history hitherto neglected by scholars, this account seeks to locate Scottish involvement in the conflict as part of a global response to the Spanish Civil War and the spread of fascism more broadly. Their motivations for going and their experiences once in Spain, it is argued, shed light on much broader questions, including the scale and methods of anti-fascist mobilisation in the period, how Stalin-era communist politics developed and affected adherents in different contexts and how British anti-communist policy was shaped during and after the Spanish conflict.

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As Bilbo Baggins (almost) once said,

I can't thank half of you half as well as I should like; and I thank less than half of you half as well as you deserve.

I doubt that anyone has ever embarked on a PhD, certainly never completed a PhD, without coming to realise the importance of community. We all have reversals and triumphs, and without friends and family around us to laugh, commiserate and, if necessary, ruthlessly puncture an over-inflated sense of self worth, none of us would ever make it.

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Note on Language and Translation

Any study of the International Brigades, especially those seeking to explore their transnational dimensions, is hamstrung by the multitude of languages spoken by the participants. No historian, certainly not the present author, can hope to be competent, let alone fluent, in all of them.

The approach taken here focuses chiefly on the XV International Brigade, which always contained a high proportion of English-speaking volunteers, and English was often used in the internal administration of the brigade. Spanish was naturally also used frequently, both within the brigade and when corresponding with other units and organisations. Other common languages include German and French, reflecting their use in the overall administration of the International Brigades and the Comintern more broadly. Unless otherwise stated, translations provided for the aforementioned languages are my own, including of course any errors.

Given the use throughout of oral testimony, it is important to acknowledge that Scottish interviewees came from a variety of geographic and social backgrounds, and often had strong accents or regional dialects. In cases where a published transcript is available, this account follows the spelling and usage provided there, which in many cases does an excellent job of capturing each individual's voice. In transcribing taped interviews, I have tried to err on the side of a faithful reproduction and avoid excessive editing, but as a non-Scot I did not feel confident attempting to capture local vernaculars, sounds and spellings. As my interpretations do not rest upon the orality of the responses, this is an aesthetic rather than analytic loss.

List of Acronyms

Anyone who has had the pleasure of perusing histories of the Spanish Civil War is aware of their general propensity for acronyms and initialisms. While every effort has been exerted to elude this issue insofar as possible, the following reference list may be of use.

BUF – British Union of Fascists

CGG - *Cuartel General del Generalísimo* (Headquarters of the Generalissimo)

CNT – *Confederación Nacional de Trabajo* (National Confederation of Labour)

Comintern – Communist International

CPGB – Communist Party of Great Britain

FAI – *Federación Anarquista Ibérica* (Iberian Anarchist Federation)

HD(S)E – Home Defence (Security) Executive

IBA – International Brigade Association

IBMT – International Brigade Memorial Trust

ILP – Independent Labour Party

LBC – Left Book Club

NUWM – National Unemployed Workers Movement

PCE – *Partido Comunista de España* (Spanish Communist Party)

POUM – *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification)

SIM – *Servicio de Investigación Militar* (Military Investigation Service)

SSP – Scottish Socialist Party

YCL – Young Communist League

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Introduction

A good deal has been said about the identity of the volunteers, but the most important thing of all has not been said. They were strangers. They were strangers to each other, divided by all of the things that unite ordinary men, namely, race, language and nation. They were united, if united at all, only by class and politics.¹

Michael Jackson's prose describing those who fought in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War (1936-9) is poetic, but here at least, beauty is not truth. Those who fought for the Spanish Republic against a fascist-backed military uprising did do so as part of a 35,000-strong international army without precedent or compare in twentieth century history.² Yet describing them as strangers to one another misses a crucial point: what divided them is not so important as what united them. This was an army organised by the Communist International (Comintern), meaning, as scholars such as Lisa Kirschenbaum have ably sketched, that there were many transnational connections between the central actors.³ The International Brigades' leaders, therefore, certainly knew each other. Yet it is not their well-known leaders that concern this thesis. From the perspective of this study, Jackson was wrong on much more fundamental level: the ordinary volunteers, the rank-and-file of international communism, knew each other both literally and figuratively. This contention underpins much of this account – that only in appreciating the interconnections between the volunteers can the International Brigades be understood. They knew one another as friends, colleagues and family before they left their homes to fight the spread of fascism; they already knew one

¹ Michael Jackson, 'The Army of Strangers: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Australian Politics and History* 32:1 (1986), 108–9.

² The Spanish Civil War has inspired a great deal of scholarship, often offering quite different interpretations and perspectives. Representative of accounts sympathetic to the Republic are Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War* (London, 2006); Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War 1936–1939* (Cambridge, 2002). For less sympathetic accounts, see Stanley Payne, *The Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2012); Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London, 2003).

³ Lisa Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2015).

another in the trenches of Spain and, even between nationalities, comradeship and cooperation was enabled by a common language of anti-fascism. Even after their return, narratives of their time in Spain continued to be shared across borders.

In exploring these themes, this account takes as its particular focus the Scots who joined the International Brigades. Over 500 Scots volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War, making up approximately a quarter of the British contingent. This made Scots the largest regional grouping in the British Battalion, far out of proportion to Scotland's population at the time. This was hardly the extent of Scottish engagement with the conflict. Others journeyed to Spain to offer medical services, humanitarian relief or as political observers and representatives. Many more took part in one of the largest and longest solidarity campaigns in modern Scottish history. Over the course of the conflict, tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of pounds were raised in Scotland to support the Spanish Republic, including funding a Scottish Ambulance Unit and two Scottish foodships, as well as providing shelter for child refugees from the Basque Country.⁴ These efforts required the sustained efforts of thousands of activists over nearly three years, and the continued generosity of chiefly working-class communities, still reeling from the effects of Scotland's interwar slump. In a part of Britain where manifestations of domestic fascism were rare and generally ineffective, the Spanish Civil War became perhaps the most important theatre of anti-fascist mobilisation in Scotland during the 1930s.⁵

The Scottish response to the Spanish Civil War was at once typical, in that it mirrored comparable movements across Britain and the world, and distinctive. While Spain was a truly global political issue, it was inevitably understood in the context of people's own lives and experiences, and Scotland's distinct political

⁴ Although several more nuanced regional studies of 'Aid Spain' have since emerged, the most comprehensive account remains Jim Fyrrth, *The Signal Was Spain: The Spanish Aid Movement in Britain, 1936–1939* (London, 1986). For a critique of Fyrrth's approach, see Tom Buchanan, 'Britain's Popular Front? Aid Spain and the British Labour Movement', *History Workshop Journal* 31 (1991), 60–72.

⁵ Stephen Cullen, 'The Fasces and the Saltire: The Failure of the British Union of Fascists in Scotland, 1932–1940', *Scottish Historical Review* 87:2 (2008), 306–31.

cultures helped shape local responses.⁶ The relative diversity of Scottish politics – Scotland being home to Britain’s only Communist and Independent Labour Party MPs, as well as prominent anti-appeasement Tory Katharine Murray – fed into a varied series of representations of the conflict, complicated further by intersections between working-class politics and Catholicism.⁷ It is in this context that the decision of hundreds of Scots to participate directly in the Spanish Civil War needs to be understood. They were the product of specific political cultures, networks and communities, and their engagement with the conflict was shaped simultaneously by broad awareness of the international situation and very local concerns and perspectives.

To date, the Scottish contingent has yet to receive sustained historical examination, unlike almost every other national grouping in the International Brigades. Yet beyond the opportunity to fill a neglected historiographical crevice, the emphasis on the Scots allows for the consideration of much broader questions, such as how so many individuals were mobilised to fight in Spain, International Brigade volunteers’ encounters with Spanish comrades and civilians and their relationship with their home governments. As a sample, the Scots offer a cohesive grouping, through which very local patterns can be observed, while still large enough to draw significant conclusions. Moreover, as a contingent with no distinct unit of their own, they invite approaches that eschew especial homage to the national perspective that has characterised so much history writing on the International Brigades. However, nor are they

⁶ On the interplay between local political cultures and context in shaping responses to Spain, see Malcolm Petrie, ‘Unity from Below? The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Labour and the Left in Aberdeen and Dundee, 1936–1939’, *Labour History Review* 79:3 (2015), 305–27. A great deal of literature details the broader distinctiveness of Scottish radical and socialist political cultures, e.g. W. Hamish Fraser, *Scottish Popular Politics: From Radicalism to Labour* (Edinburgh, 2000); William Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800–Present* (Edinburgh, 1999); Catriona MacDonald, *The Radical Thread: Political Change in Scotland, Paisley Politics: 1885–1924* (East Linton, 2000).

⁷ Scottish MPs were responsible for a diverse and influential series of contemporary publications on Spain, including religious issues, such as John McGovern, *Why Bishops Back Franco* (London, 1936) and *Terror in Spain* (London, 1937); Katharine Murray, *Searchlight on Spain* (London, 1938). On the Spanish Civil War’s impact on Scottish politics and sectarianism, see Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace: Religious tension in modern Scotland* (Manchester, 1987).

typical transnational subjects. They tended to be immensely ordinary, overwhelmingly working class in origin and most had never previously left Britain. This, it is held, makes them more rather than less typical of the International Brigades more broadly.

This, in other words, is not a parochial study. Their decision to fight in Spain places the Scottish volunteers at a crucial juncture in history, and understanding this choice and its ramifications takes us from grassroots histories of Scottish socialism, to the structures of international communism, to the battlefields of Spain and their place in the titanic clashes of ideas of the 1930s and 1940s. This thesis places the Scottish volunteers in the context of important wider histories: of foreign fighters, interwar anti-fascism and the relationship between communism and the British state. It is therefore simultaneously a work of Scottish, British and European history, with occasional trans-Atlantic or global implications, particularly when it comes to understanding other manifestations of foreign fighters, a topic of renewed contemporary relevance given recent history in Syria and beyond.

The Spanish Civil War and the International Brigades

Although no modern civil war has ever been entirely divorced from an international context, Spain's civil war happened at a time and place that guaranteed exceptional international interest and involvement.⁸ Across Europe and the world, the political left and right readily saw their own struggles reflected in Spain. For the anti-fascist left in Scotland, the military uprising in Spain fit neatly into a broader global narrative of fascist expansionism. In the words of Edinburgh volunteer Donald Renton, Spain was 'part and parcel of the general offensive by the Fascist Powers against working class rights and

⁸ On the war's international context, see Michael Alpert, *A New International History of the Spanish Civil War* (Basingstoke, 2004). On the nature and conceptions of 'civil war' itself, see David Armitage, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (New Haven, 2017).

liberties all over the world.’⁹ Many retrospectively shared Dundonian Tom Clarke’s view that the Spanish Civil War offered an opportunity to defeat this offensive, and ‘that if we were able to win there the possibility is you would never have had a Second World War.’¹⁰ These narratives left little place for the nuances of Spain’s politics and history, and the complex causes of the war itself.¹¹ Insofar as Spain’s particular context was understood, it was through the broad sweep of Spanish history, with the old, feudal Spain of the army, landlords and Catholic Church conspiring to destroy the new modern, progressive Spain.¹² The conflict was rapidly constructed and construed as a set of moral binaries – progress against reaction, civilisation against barbarism and, above all, democracy against fascism.

Viewing the Spanish Civil War as a flashpoint in a global anti-fascist struggle was lent credence by the conflict’s rapidly apparent international dimensions. Swift intervention from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany provided crucial early impetus for the military rebels, particularly in enabling the transfer of the Spanish Army of Africa – Spain’s most professional force – to southern Spain. Both also lent direct military support to the rebels on air, sea and land, as well as providing substantial material aid. On the Republican side, initial support from the French Popular Front government was soon withdrawn following British diplomatic pressure, reflecting British alarm at the potential for escalation should Spain become a proxy war between democratic and fascist powers.¹³ The impact of what became known as the Non-Intervention

⁹ Renton in Ian MacDougall, *Voices From The Spanish Civil War: Personal Recollections of Scottish Volunteers in Republican Spain 1936–39* (Edinburgh, 1986), 21.

¹⁰ Clarke in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 66.

¹¹ There is a great deal of scholarship examining the history of the Spanish Republic and the causes of the civil war. On the establishment and course of the Second Republic, see Gabriel Jackson, *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1931–1939* (Princeton, 1965); Fernando del Rey Reguillo, *The Spanish Second Republic Revisited: From Democratic Hopes to Civil War (1931–1936)* (Brighton, 2012). For differing perspectives on the conflicts’ causes, see Stanley Payne, *The collapse of the Spanish Republic, 1933–1936* (New Haven, 2006); Paul Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction and Revolution 1931–1936* (London, 1994).

¹² On British perceptions of Spain and the civil war, see Tom Buchanan, *The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain* (Brighton, 2007), 1–22.

¹³ British Government perspectives are discussed in Enrique Moradiellos, ‘The Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War: Anglo-Spanish Relations in Early 1936’, *European*

Agreement was notably uneven, only restricting the participation of states that abided by international rules and conventions. This meant that while Italy and Germany happily continued to provide support for the rebels after signing, only the Soviet Union and Mexico proved willing to aid the Republic on similar terms, to considerably less effect.¹⁴

For military historians, quantifying the support each side received in terms of guns, planes and tanks has proven an arduous task.¹⁵ Yet for this study's purposes, it is the qualitative differences that matter more. Unlike Mussolini and Hitler, Stalin proved unwilling and unable to send a Soviet army to Spain to fight for the Republic. Instead, using the networks and influence developed through the Comintern, the Soviet Union undertook to recruit and organise an international volunteer army to fight for the Spanish Republic. Although the Comintern had not pioneered the idea of foreigners joining the Republican war effort, their involvement changed the nature of foreign volunteering. Not only did their resources prove vital in enabling far greater numbers to make the journey to Spain, the establishment of dedicated international units – the International Brigades – marked a departure from the scattered participation of individual volunteers. Their status as independent units lent them a unique and highly visible role, both militarily and in propaganda.

The International Brigades fought for nearly two years before their withdrawal. They first saw action in the desperate defence of Madrid in November 1936, after General Franco's Army of Africa had fought its way across southern Spain before being stopped on the capital's outskirts. In early 1937 – by which time a British Battalion had been formed as part of the XV International Brigade – they fought in a series of defensive efforts to protect Madrid's lines of

History Quarterly 21 (1991), 339–64. For the French, see David Wingeate Pike, *France Divided: The French and the Spanish Civil War* (Brighton, 2011).

¹⁴ On these policies, see Douglas Little, *Malevolent Neutrality: The United States, Great Britain and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War* (Ithaca, 1985). On Soviet intervention, Daniel Kowalsky, *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War* (New York, 2004). For the impact of foreign military aid, Michael Alpert, 'The Clash of Spanish Armies: Contrasting Ways of War in Spain, 1936–1939', *War in History* 6:3 (1999), 331–51.

¹⁵ Alpert, 'The Clash of Spanish Armies', 331–3.

communication, with the International Brigades playing important roles in defensive victories at Jarama and Guadalajara. These battles would mark the high point of the International Brigades' direct contribution to the Republican war effort, with foreign volunteers thereafter making up a progressively smaller proportion of both the Republican Army and the International Brigades themselves. For the British, exhausted after months of frontline service, July 1937 saw further substantial losses in a failed counteroffensive north of Madrid at Brunete. The British then moved to Aragon, fighting at Belchite and Teruel, both costly Republican victories that were reversed in early 1938. In March 1938, the British Battalion again suffered catastrophic losses during Franco's Aragon offensive, which saw Republican territory split in two, with the International Brigades in Catalonia. The British Battalion's last major actions took place here during the final Republican offensive across the River Ebro. This, as with other Republican offensives, was a temporary, costly success. The British were finally withdrawn from the line at the end of September 1938, and from Spain two months later. Although this was the end of their physical battle for the Republic, it marked only the beginning of the battle over their legacy.

Writing the International Brigades

The organisers of the International Brigades looked to history. Parallels were readily drawn with Byron in Greece and other romantic, heroic soldiers of conscience over the previous century.¹⁶ Equally, however, participants appreciated that their endeavour marked a departure from this history – in the words of George Aitken, 'ours was the first Battalion of British workers which had left Britain to fight for freedom and democracy.'¹⁷ Writing to British Communist Party leader Harry Pollitt, Peter Kerrigan also pointed to the gaze of history while the British Battalion first prepared to go into action.

¹⁶ E.g. 'Early I.B.', [1937?], Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History [RGASPI], 545/3/478/142–3.

¹⁷ International Brigade Archive, Marx Memorial Library [MML], Box D-7, File E/1.

What many [volunteers] don't visualise clearly, is the historic part they are playing. They are too close to it all to see that history is being made here.¹⁸

Aitken and Kerrigan were both senior Scottish communists, in Spain as political representatives as much as fighters, roles that encouraged them to consider the broader picture. They were hardly alone in doing so: in mid-1937, an International Brigades Historical Commission was established, partly to produce propaganda, but also to 'collect all material that will make the writing of an accurate and true history possible at some undefined future date.'¹⁹ This eye to future history writing – which might not be published 'for 10-20-30 years' – complicates the task of the historian in the present, driving home the reality that archival material preserved in Spain was collected, selected and preserved with a view to its use in celebrating the International Brigades.²⁰

It should therefore come as no surprise that the participants were primed to set their experiences on record, forming the first generation of history writing.²¹ Bill Rust, Spanish correspondent of the British Communist Party newspaper the *Daily Worker*, published an account within months of the British volunteers' return.²² Rust's book was unsurprisingly celebratory, mirroring similar accounts in other contexts in the years immediately following the end of the war.²³ They were countered by several anti-communist publications, most notoriously those commissioned by the new Franco regime in an effort to discredit the international volunteers, but also from disillusioned ex-

¹⁸ Kerrigan to Pollitt, 7 February 1937, MML, Box C, File 10.

¹⁹ Historical Commission Circular, [1937?], RGASPI, 545/2/164/179. These efforts resulted in a number of wartime 'histories', such as Frank Ryan (ed.), *The Book of the XVth Brigade* (Madrid, 1938).

²⁰ Minutes of Historical Commission Meeting, 23 September 1937, RGASPI, 545/2/164/47.

²¹ For a historiographical overview, see Manuel Requena Gallego, 'Las Brigadas Internacionales: una aproximación historiográfica', *Ayer* 56 (2004), 11–35.

²² William Rust, *Britons in Spain: the history of the British Battalion of the XVth International Brigade* (London, 1939). In the American context, see Edwin Rolfe, *The Lincoln Battalion* (New York, 1939).

²³ For a list, see Gallego, *Las Brigadas Internacionales*, 16–18.

volunteers.²⁴ These early years saw the emergence of competing mythologies of the International Brigades, which were defined further by the onset of the Cold War.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the advent of more traditional scholarly interest, with histories of the International Brigades published by Vincent Brome and Verle Johnston in English, and Jacques Delperrie de Bayac in French.²⁵ These accounts marked an important shift in history writing on the International Brigades, although they suffered from uneven access to primary documentation. In Spain, Ricardo de la Cierva y de Hoces continued the work of early Francoist propagandists in denigrating the International Brigades, sometimes on laughable grounds, even after the regime's end.²⁶ For the Francoist state, such attacks served two key purposes: highlighting the ideological threat posed by their Republican foes, who had relied upon the services of such degenerate 'Reds', while also helping to explain why Franco took so long to win the war, despite supposedly enjoying the support of all 'true' Spaniards. In this climate, it took many years for Andreu Castells' account to be published, which would remain the standard work on the International Brigades in Spanish for several decades.²⁷

Interest in the Spanish Civil War was kindled on several fronts during the 1980s, especially in the English-speaking world, thanks to a slew of anniversaries, Spain's transition to democracy and Cold War escalation. In

²⁴ Requena Gallego, 'Las Brigadas Internacionales', 16–17. In a British context, see among others Hamish Fraser, *The Truth About Spain* (Oxford, c.1950); Fred Copeman, *Reason in Revolt* (London, 1948) and Stephen Spender, *World Within World* (London, 1950).

²⁵ Vincent Brome, *The International Brigades: Spain 1936–1939* (London, 1965); Verle Johnston, *Legions of Babel: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War* (Pennsylvania, 1967); Jacques Delperrie de Bayac, *Les Brigades Internationales* (Paris, 1968).

²⁶ Ricardo de la Cierva y de Hoces, *Leyenda y tragedia de las brigadas internacionales* (Madrid, 1971), see also *Brigadas internacionales 1936–1939. La verdadera historia. Mentira histórica y error de Estado* (Toledo, 1997).

²⁷ Andreu Castells, *Las Brigadas Internacionales de la Guerra de España* (Esplugues de Llobregat, 1974). Subsequent Spanish accounts have added little analytic depth, e.g. César Vidal, *Las Brigadas Internacionales* (Madrid, 1998); Santiago Alvarez, *Historia Política y Militar de las Brigadas Internacionales* (Madrid, 1996). More critical albeit not necessarily incisive is Antonio Celada and Daniel Pastor Garcia, *Los brigadistas de habla inglesa y la Guerra Civil Española* (Madrid, 2002).

Britain, Bill Alexander, an ex-commander of the British contingent, wrote a new celebratory account. Intended to cement the historical reputation of the British 'Volunteers for Liberty', Alexander's book benefitted from his first-hand knowledge, contacts with surviving veterans and access to documents held by the International Brigade Association (IBA), but skirted many uncomfortable questions.²⁸ The 1980s also saw the centre of gravity of revisionist work shift from Spain to the United States, with R. Dan Richardson's account proving especially influential. Richardson was prescient, with many claims regarding Comintern involvement in organising and leading the International Brigades having since been vindicated.²⁹ In particular, Ronald Radosh, Mary Habeck and Grigory Sevostianov published a series of documents from ex-Soviet archives, exploring the extent of Soviet involvement in the International Brigades and the Spanish Republic more broadly.³⁰ For these anti-communist Cold Warriors, establishing Comintern involvement sufficed to prove the sinister nature of the enterprise. Yet aside from questions of selectivity – Radosh et al chose their sources based on their ideological needs – these accounts did far less to establish what Soviet influence actually meant for ordinary volunteers.³¹ Michael Jackson was the first to address the gap, laying charges of communist incompetence and exploring the consequences for ordinary volunteers, although his account had its own limitations in interpretation and source material.³²

In the British context, the division between celebratory and revisionist accounts has only strengthened in recent decades. James Hopkins took a notably critical approach, particularly on the question of political repression, using newly-

²⁸ Bill Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty: Spain, 1936–1939* (London, 1982).

²⁹ R. Dan Richardson, *Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (Lexington, 1982).

³⁰ Ronald Radosh, Mary Habeck and Grigory Sevostianov (eds.), *Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven, 2001).

³¹ Helen Graham, 'Spain Betrayed? The New Historical McCarthyism', *Science & Society* 68:3 (2004), 366–8.

³² Michael Jackson, *Fallen Sparrows: the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1994).

released archival material to substantiate his accusations.³³ Robert Stradling also made important revisionist contributions, particularly in Welsh and Irish contexts.³⁴ While these accounts were never fully convincing, for reasons explored in depth in Chapter Four, they did succeed in shifting the debate. Richard Baxell's first book on the British contingent marked a change from the previous generation of scholarship in acknowledging and addressing controversial subjects.³⁵ While still broadly celebratory, Baxell has done a great deal to explore and acknowledge the International Brigades' failings. Moreover, Baxell's first book is an invaluable work of social history, doing more than any other national account to establish a broad picture of who the British volunteers were. While unsatisfactory from a specifically Scottish perspective – while many Scots appear as actors, Scotland's particular contribution is not explored – Baxell's work offers a crucial foundation, without which the thematic approach taken here would be impossible.³⁶ While Baxell's books represent the best work on the subject, they paradoxically appear most often as targets of criticism, precisely because this account focuses so much on building on their achievements.

Scottish volunteers naturally feature more prominently in Daniel Gray's popular history of Scotland and the Spanish Civil War, yet despite longstanding academic interest in the subject, little scholarly history writing has emerged.³⁷ Ian MacDougall, Ian Wood and Victor Kiernan published brief pieces exploring or contextualising the Scottish involvement in the conflict, but stopped well

³³ James Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire: The British in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford, 1998).

³⁴ Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939: Crusades in Conflict* (Manchester, 1999), *Wales and the Spanish Civil War: The Dragon's Dearest Cause?* (Cardiff, 2004) and *History and Legend: Writing the International Brigades* (Cardiff, 2003).

³⁵ Richard Baxell, *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2004) and *Unlikely Warriors: The British in the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2012).

³⁶ Histories of Britain and the Spanish Civil War often do not focus on regional or national perspectives, e.g. Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 1997). While Lewis Mates has concentrated on regional perspectives, he has thus far not included Scotland in his comparisons. Lewis Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and The British Left: Political Activism and the Popular Front* (London, 2007) and 'Durham and South Wales Miners in the Spanish Civil War', *Twentieth Century British History* 17:3 (2006), 373–95.

³⁷ Daniel Gray, *Homage to Caledonia: Scotland and the Spanish Civil War* (Edinburgh, 2008).

short of attempting a definitive account.³⁸ This is in striking contrast to the Welsh and Irish contexts, which have seen substantial scholarly and popular interest.³⁹ This has perhaps placed an undue burden on Gray's contribution – it is not, and is not intended to be, a scholarly treatment of the subject. While ably sketching a broad narrative of Scottish participation in the Spanish Civil War, Gray does not seek to ask or answer particular questions about Scottish involvement in the conflict.

What is striking about the historiography of the International Brigades is the staleness of debate, reflecting broader issues with history writing on the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁰ Crucially, this has manifested not just in ideological divisions between celebratory and revisionist accounts, but in that research questions have also remained static, with the overarching question of Comintern involvement and its consequences continuing to drive agendas well into the twenty-first century. Two recent articles dealing with 'myths' of the International Brigades, from Richard Baxell and self-styled revisionists, Daniel Pastor García and Antonio Celada, typify this lack of movement.⁴¹ Both focus on remarkably similar themes, such as the long-defunct view that the International Brigades were predominantly made up of literary figures. Attempts to explore new topics – or to reconcile differing perspectives – remain rare. One exception

³⁸ Ian Wood, 'Scotland and the Spanish Civil War', *Cencrastus* (Autumn 1984), 14–16; Victor Kiernan, 'Foreword' in MacDougall, *Voices From The Spanish Civil War*, v–xi. See also Petrie, 'Unity from Below?'.
³⁹ Aside from aforementioned texts by Mates and Stradling, see celebratory accounts by Hywel Francis, *Miners Against Fascism: Wales and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 1984) and Michael O'Riordan, *Connolly Column: The story of the Irishmen who fought for the Spanish Republic 1936–1939* (Dublin, 1979). See also Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999) and 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', *Irish Historical Studies* 33:129 (2002), 68–90; David Convery, 'Ireland and the Fall of the Second Republic in Spain', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 84:7–8 (2012), 215–225.

⁴⁰ On the broader historiography, see Ruth MacKay, 'History on the Line: The Good Fight and Good History in the Spanish Civil War', *History Workshop Journal* 70 (2010), 199–206. For the International Brigades in particular, see George Esenwein, Freedom 'Fighters or Comintern Soldiers? Writing About the 'Good Fight' During the Spanish Civil War', *Civil Wars* 12:1–2 (2010), 156–66.

⁴¹ Richard Baxell, 'Myths of the International Brigades', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 91:1–2 (2014), 11–24; Daniel Pastor García and Antonio Celada, 'The Victors Write History, the Vanquished Literature: Myth, Distortion and Truth in the XV Brigade', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 89:7–8 (2012), 307–21.

is Remi Skoutelsky's overview of the International Brigades, although it has sadly never been translated into English.⁴² Skoutelsky is willing to ask hard questions of both celebratory and revisionist narratives, painting a convincing picture of haphazard organisation and the ensuing gaps between intention and reality, as well as offering a careful reassessment of notorious individuals such as André Marty.⁴³ However, Skoutelsky's book, while valuable, is far from the last word in the field. Its scope necessitates a top-down approach, leaving correspondingly little room for the actual experiences of International Brigaders. Nor does it offer comparative analysis, preventing appreciation – much less explanation – of importance differences across national groups.⁴⁴

The 'National' Approach

One reason that Skoutelsky felt little need to engage with national variety is because, in theory, these perspectives are well catered-for. While overarching accounts of the International Brigades have grown less common, work dealing with specific national contingents has flourished. Different national contexts often trace a similar ideological divide as in Britain. In the United States, for instance, a celebratory account written in the 1960s by ex-volunteer Arthur Landis was challenged by Cecil Eby.⁴⁵ Following the end of the Cold War, both camps sought to make use of new archival material to reinforce their positions, with Peter Carroll releasing a new book in 1994, followed by Eby's updated revisionist account in 2007.⁴⁶ Both, particularly in comparison to British historiography, leave much to be desired. Carroll's celebratory account is journalistic in style and lacks sufficient scholarly apparatus, making limited use

⁴² Remi Skoutelsky, *Novedad en el frente: Las Brigadas Internacionales en la guerra civil* (Madrid, 2006).

⁴³ Skoutelsky, *Novedad*, 339–44.

⁴⁴ Skoutelsky has also been criticised for neglecting non-European volunteers, e.g. González et al, *Voluntarios de Argentina en la Guerra Civil Española* (Buenos Aires, 2008), 135–8.

⁴⁵ Arthur Landis, *The Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (New York, 1967); Cecil Eby, *Between the Bullet and the Lie: American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* (New York, 1969).

⁴⁶ Peter Carroll, *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford, 1994); Cecil Eby, *Comrades and Commissars: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War* (Pennsylvania, 2007).

of new archival material. Eby's anti-communist tract is similarly journalistic, although deserves credit for taking seriously the challenge of integrating Spanish perspectives.

Eby's success in this regard points to a crucial limitation of the 'national' paradigm. Historians have often replicated the national divisions nominally found in the structures of the International Brigades, neglecting how these boundaries were crossed in reality. From early 1937, increasing numbers of Spaniards served in their ranks, while encounters – positive and negative – with other national groups were part of the day-to-day experience. Nonetheless, many national accounts deal only with 'their' nationality in any depth, paying little attention to how they interacted with other national groups, or even with Spanish soldiers and civilians. While overarching accounts such as Skoutelsky's show the international character of the hierarchy, they shed less light on what these everyday encounters were like. This is especially problematic when considering groups that did not serve in their own unit, such as Australians, Cypriots and, of course, Scots.⁴⁷ While national accounts might pay attention to obvious moments of friction – such as the defection of some Irish volunteers from the British to American Battalion in early 1937 – much less attention is paid to the kind of everyday transnational encounters that defined the volunteering experience.⁴⁸ In the Scottish context, this is particularly egregious with regards to interactions with Spaniards, as explored in Chapter Five, but few historians have dealt with these questions in any depth.

National accounts often have other weaknesses that are replicated across contexts. This approach – implicitly dedicated to exploring a given group's distinctiveness – can be prone to romanticism, even in the hands of competent and critical historians. One frequent symptom is the replication of wartime

⁴⁷ Such accounts tend towards a scattered, biographical focus. E.g. Amirah Inglis, *Australians in the Spanish Civil War* (Sydney, 1987); Paul Strongos, *Spanish Thermopylae: Cypriot Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–39* (Barcelona, 2009).

⁴⁸ The Irish incident is covered from various perspectives in Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War*, 154–9; Eby, *Comrades and Commissars*, 34–5 and Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 133–4.

discourses regarding the particular skills or reputation of each contingent.⁴⁹ Gerben Zaagsma provides an exception, pointing out that the supposed repute of the Botwin Company – the only explicitly Jewish unit – is based on internal propaganda.⁵⁰ Enumeration is another difficult methodological challenge, with substantial numbers of volunteers living complicated transnational lives. Should, for example, a Finnish national who emigrated to Canada in the 1920s be counted as a Finnish or Canadian volunteer? Michael Petrou grapples with this question, as the Canadian contingent contained an unusually large number of recent immigrants, but this issue affects almost every national group to some degree.⁵¹ The tendency is often to count as many volunteers as possible, partly out of completeness but also likely because a larger total implicitly adds significance.⁵² In this vein, one study of Irish volunteers counted second-generation immigrants of Irish descent as ‘Irish’ for their tally.⁵³ While understandable, the result is a comparative and analytical nightmare. How can an overall picture of volunteer numbers be arrived at, if many are double counted? How can numbers between groups be compared, if all are underpinned by different methodologies? This problem is addressed in Chapter One, which seeks to establish an analytically useful definition of ‘Scottish’ while placing their numbers in their proper context.

⁴⁹ E.g. Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver, 2008), 112–13; Inglis, *Australians in the Spanish Civil War*, 124–6; Eby, *Comrades and Commissars*, 25–31; Carroll, *Odyssey*, 91–2, 102.

⁵⁰ Gerben Zaagsma, “‘Red Devils’: The Botwin Company in the Spanish Civil War”, *East European Jewish Affairs* 33 (2003), 92.

⁵¹ Petrou, *Renegades*, 22–33. Similar issues have occurred in the recent project to construct a database of Italian anti-fascist fighters in Spain and their involvement in European Resistance movements during the Second World War. In applying the widest possible inclusion criteria, the database now lists some 4,500 individuals – over 1,000 more than actually fought in the International Brigades. While such criteria made sense for this individual project, the value of its statistics for comparative purposes is limited. See ‘Oggi in Spagna, Domani in Italia’, hosted by AICVAS and Istituto Nazionale Ferruccio Parri.

<http://www.antifascistispagna.it/?page_id=1966>, last accessed 16 February 2018.

⁵² Petrou, for instance, revised the number of Canadians upwards to 1,700. Petrou, *Renegades*, 13. For previous, lower estimates see Victor Howard, *MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion: The Canadian Contingent in the Spanish Civil War* (Toronto, 1969); William Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936–1939* (Regina, 1989).

⁵³ O’Riordan, *Connolly Column*, 2.

Transnationalism

Given the limitations of national accounts, recent work has embraced transnationalism as a way of moving beyond artificial boundaries and exploring the complexities of volunteering in Spain. This has led to some valuable contributions shedding new light on familiar material, as well as asking fresh and interesting questions. Lisa Kirschenbaum's aforementioned book on Comintern operatives in Spain stands out as an excellent contribution that has advanced the field substantially. Yet despite its effectiveness, Kirschenbaum's piece shares a weakness with much transnational work in that it concentrates on what might be termed 'transnational exemplars' – those who have, to the historian's eye, led interestingly transnational lives. In Kirschenbaum's case, this is quite explicit: aside from the emphasis on elite, mobile Comintern operatives trained at the International Lenin School, the particular focus on Americans is justified as they were a 'notably transnational and multilingual contingent.'⁵⁴ Here, as with other calls to appreciate interwar anti-fascism as built on a 'culture of exile', there is a tendency to see physical movement across borders as justifying attention in itself.⁵⁵ This is problematic when considering a grouping such as the Scots, the vast bulk of whom had never previously crossed borders. If explanations of the International Brigades are bound too closely to interwar migration, exile and diaspora, then we risk ignoring large swathes of participants, many of whom are already less visible in the source base.

In addressing this concern, this account seeks to situate itself in an awkward gap in existing transnational work. Broadly speaking, two approaches to writing transnational history have appeared in this context. The first is typified by Kirschenbaum's account: focusing on a category that allows for appreciation of transnational connections, such as the Comintern apparatus in Spain.⁵⁶ Gerben

⁵⁴ Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 5.

⁵⁵ Hugo García, 'Transnational History: A New Paradigm for Anti-Fascist Studies?', *Contemporary European History* 25:4 (2016), 566.

⁵⁶ Common in other contexts is focusing on particular movements or networks, e.g. Joseph Fronczak, 'Local People's Global Politics: A Transnational History of the Hands Off Ethiopia

Zaagsma's recent book on Jewish volunteers is another excellent example, yet shares another weakness with Kirschenbaum's work – the sheer difficulty of doing expansive transnational history.⁵⁷ Just as Kirschenbaum's focus was shaped by her background as an American historian of the Soviet Union, so too does Zaagsma's study follow the lines of his particular expertise, in this case the Polish-Jewish Botwin Company, and the Jewish diaspora in Paris. This does not detract from the achievements of either account, but imposes constraints on the scope of their analysis. Rather than a failing on their part, this represents the practical limits on any single transnational study, with an all-encompassing study of Jewish volunteers, for instance, requiring a grasp of ten or more languages, and engagement with archival material spread even further afield.⁵⁸

The second approach has focused on examining 'transnational lives', tracing individual trajectories and building complex portraits of their motives and experiences.⁵⁹ This approach to the International Brigades is typified by Helen Graham, who focuses on several such individuals from a variety of backgrounds, all of whom led exemplary transnational lives.⁶⁰ This has the advantage of depth and complexity, allowing historians to appreciate the intricate range of push and pull factors that led people to Spain. Yet these advantages are also disadvantages – such individualised studies make it difficult to point to generalisable factors, absolving the historian of any need to explain the broader phenomenon. Moreover, such approaches reinforce the tendency to privilege elite or atypical voices. In broader transnational history writing, this problem

Movement of 1935', *Diplomatic History* 39:2 (2015), 245–74; Kasper Braskén, 'Making Anti-Fascism Transnational: The Origins of Communist and Socialist Articulations of Resistance in Europe, 1923–1924', *Contemporary European History* 25:4 (2016), 573–596.

⁵⁷ Gerben Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2017).

⁵⁸ Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers*, 13–14.

⁵⁹ E.g. Dan Stone, 'Anti-Fascist Europe Comes to Britain: Theorising Fascism as a Contribution to Defeating it', in Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz (eds.), *Varieties of Anti-Fascism: Britain in the Inter-War period* (Basingstoke, 2010); Claudia Baldoli, "'With Rome and with Moscow': Italian Catholic Communism and Anti-Fascist Exile', *Contemporary European History* 25:4 (2016), 619–43. More broadly, see collections such as Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott (eds.), *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–present* (London, 2010).

⁶⁰ Helen Graham, *The War and its Shadow: Spain's Civil War in Europe's Long Twentieth Century* (Brighton, 2012), 75–91.

has been addressed through obscurity – that is, subjecting less notable lives to the same methods and scrutiny, in the assumption that less noteworthy lives are more representative.⁶¹ Yet exploring any biography in such depth requires an exceptional source base, which in turn usually requires an atypical individual. Source material relating to International Brigade volunteers has not been preserved evenly – those with status, education and political connections are far more prominent in the source base. Even as the myth of the ‘literary’ International Brigades is put to rest, we should be wary of building up a new unrepresentative picture in its place.⁶² The Scots offer a particular utility as a case study in this regard, precisely because so few of them lived explicitly transnational lives, although they were certainly still influenced by transnational networks and ways of thinking.

Instead, this account proposes what might be awkwardly termed a transnational national approach.⁶³ In examining a national group that did not serve in its own ‘national’ unit and in appreciating the fluidity of boundaries in both Scotland and Spain, it is intended that many of the methodological advantages of transnational history be preserved. Yet by using a bounded, cohesive sample, it is possible to also borrow from the methods of social history, utilising quantitative as well as qualitative analysis, enabling an approach that is simultaneously cognisant of individual complexity yet able to offer insight into the phenomenon as a whole. In doing so, this account holds that the particular local and national contexts from which volunteers came was important in understanding motives for volunteering, and never became irrelevant during their service.

⁶¹ This method is advocated as a means of answering concerns that transnational history ‘may become disconnected from the day-to-day struggles of ordinary people’s lives’ in Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott, ‘Introduction’ in Deacon et al (eds.), *Transnational Lives*, 5.

⁶² Baxell, ‘Myths’, 13.

⁶³ Ariel Lambe’s recent study of Cuba and Spain takes a similar approach, but concentrates on what Spain reveals about transnational Cuban anti-fascism and activism rather than pursuing insight into the International Brigades themselves. Ariel Lambe, *Cuban Antifascism and the Spanish Civil War: Transnational Activism, Networks, and Solidarity in the 1930s* (PhD Thesis: Columbia University, 2014).

Networks

This approach to transnationalism is enabled by a particular approach to examining volunteers' networks. While existing accounts such as Kirschenbaum's have investigated elite networks in Spain, this thesis explores them from below, arguing that most volunteers were already integrated into communist networks before they went to Spain. This has profound implications: aside from framing the decision to enlist as a product of group dynamics, it also challenges claims that the International Brigades were significantly ideologically diverse or representative of a broad swathe of progressive thought. Moreover, these networks often survived the shift to Spain, where they continued to shape the volunteering experience throughout the International Brigades' existence.

This approach is informed by work on other transnational activist networks in the interwar period.⁶⁴ Moreover, it takes seriously Michael Goebel's plea to go beyond simply demonstrating the existence of transnational networks, but tie them to concrete outcomes, in this case not only the decision to volunteer, but also volunteers' physical, mental and political experiences of volunteering.⁶⁵ Work utilising Social Network Analysis has also informed how these networks have been substantiated and visualised, but there is no attempt to employ quantitative methods associated with this approach.⁶⁶ This limitation is imposed by the fragmentary and inconsistent source base, in part due to preservation issues, but also due to the nature of the networks themselves. As noted by Browne and Faue, the Popular Frontist left tended to 'downplay the connections between the personal and the political and to focus their attention

⁶⁴ Alongside work discussed in the context of transnationalism, see Isabelle Richet, 'Marion Cave Rosselli and the Transnational Women's Anti-fascist Networks', *Journal of Women's History* 24:3 (2012), 117–39.

⁶⁵ Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2015), 291.

⁶⁶ Of particular relevance here were approaches attempting to plot diffuse urban communities and their networks, see John Scott, *Social Network Analysis* (London, 2013), 78–82.

exclusively in the public realm of activism.’⁶⁷ Activists often proved reluctant, at the time and since, to discuss the intersection between their social and political lives, yet enough material survives to sketch the outline of a network that crossed Scotland and beyond. The goal, particularly in Chapter Two, is to describe the bounds of this network qualitatively, positing that what remains visible in the source base resembles the tip of an iceberg, the whole of which represented the Communist Party sphere of influence in Scotland, underpinned by social as much as political connections. However, in emphasising networks, attention is paid to the concerns of Patricia Clavin and others regarding the portrayal of history as the development of progressively more interconnected transnational networks.⁶⁸ While the networks discussed here were important, it was their local and regional dimensions that offer the most explanatory power rather than their more limited transnational connections.

The ‘Volunteer’?

In pointing to recruitment for Spain taking place chiefly within well-defined networks – and arguing that this is vital for understanding the decision – this thesis also engages with historical literature on the nature of ‘volunteering’ in warfare. Just as recent work has sought to complicate the patriotism-volunteering causality that has dominated discussion of volunteering in national contexts, this thesis seeks to challenge the idea that International Brigaders chose to fight in Spain for purely ideological reasons.⁶⁹ This task is complicated by the ubiquity of the word ‘volunteer’ when discussing the International

⁶⁷ Kathleen Brown and Elizabeth Faue, ‘Social Bonds, Sexual Politics, and Political Community on the U.S. Left, 1920s–1940s’ *Left History* 7:1 (2000), 10. Useful discussion of connections between personal and political in the British context, albeit heavily focused on middle-class communists, is found in Thomas Linehan, *Communism in Britain: 1920–39: From the Cradle to the Grave* (Manchester, 2007).

⁶⁸ Patricia Clavin, ‘Defining Transnationalism’, *Contemporary European History* 14:4 (2005), 424.

⁶⁹ A recent edited collection sketches these issues across a number of contexts. Christine Krüger and Sonja Levson (eds.), *War Volunteering in Modern Times* (Basingstoke, 2011). See also Nir Arielli and Bruce Collins, ‘Introduction: Transnational Military Service since the Eighteenth Century’ in Arielli and Collins (eds.), *Transnational Soldiers: Foreign Military Enlistment in the Modern Era* (London, 2013), 7–10.

Brigades, not least by the participants themselves at the time and since. Using 'volunteer' contributes to the historiographical tendency to think of the decision as internalised, the product of an individual's personal communion with conscience and belief. However, avoiding this word is not an option, given its ubiquity in most primary and secondary material. Rather, this account uses the term as a descriptor, while acknowledging that any decision to 'volunteer' was subject to external pressure. It is useful to think of any decision to fight in wartime as lying on a spectrum, conceived here as triangular, with coercion, material gain and ideology at each corner. Thus we might think of a conscript, mercenary or volunteer as embodying each extreme, but must acknowledge that in reality, most such decisions will retain some ambiguity. A conscript, for instance, might have options such as draft-dodging or conscientious objection, while a mercenary might refuse assignments in accordance with their own moral framework.⁷⁰ Thus, while International Brigade volunteers were usually inspired by their ideological beliefs, this does not mean that their decisions were entirely separate from material and especially social considerations.

This means no longer regarding International Brigaders as inherently exceptional, but viewing them as subject to similar pressures as others who have participated voluntarily in modern conflicts. By this, it is not intended to rake over old ground and claim that volunteers were motivated by desire for adventure or unemployment – or, more extremely, that the Communist Party tricked unemployed workers to Spain by promising jobs.⁷¹ While one can point to those for whom adventure or chronic unemployment was a factor, both have fundamentally limited explanatory power. If unemployment sufficed to induce volunteering, the British Battalion would have been several million strong. If

⁷⁰ Discussion of the malleable nature of mercenary service in this context is provided in reference to the American airmen who fought for the Republic, with John Edwards arguing that while most initially had mercenary motivations, they did come to identify with the Republican cause. John Edwards, *Airmen Without Portfolio: U.S. Mercenaries in Civil War Spain* (Westport, 1997), xi–xiii.

⁷¹ For discussion of such claims, see Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 27–30. Many accounts have placed some, usually limited, weight on these motivations, see Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, 127; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 454–5.

‘adventure’ was sought, it could be found elsewhere, not least comparable conflicts in China or Ethiopia. In other words, while such factors cannot be discounted in a biographical sense, they cannot be considered as explaining the wider phenomenon. Rather, the analysis of volunteering presented here seeks to ground the decision in its specific context. How did understandings, ideological and otherwise, of the Spanish Civil War lend themselves to the decision to personally intervene? If – as in other instances such as the First World War or Boer War – peer pressure and community expectations played a role in encouraging individuals to volunteer, how could such influences be sustained in the absence of anything resembling a national consensus?⁷² Chapter Two posits that while a nationwide consensus was impossible, it was possible to forge collective understandings of the conflict on a local basis, in communities centred on the social and political networks to which the volunteers belonged. This in turn can help explain why recruitment was more successful in Scotland than the rest of Britain, and offers a basis for comparing the Scots not just to other contingents of volunteers in Spain, but other modern incarnations of foreign fighters.

Foreign Fighters

The study of individuals who, for non-monetary reasons, participate in conflicts in which their home state is not involved remains an emerging field. Although individual instances have been studied in depth, efforts to address the phenomenon itself are rare. Elizabeth Roberts was among the first to attempt a comparative approach, contrasting British volunteers in Spain with those who fought in Finland in 1940 and in the Greek War of Independence.⁷³ Yet although

⁷² Alexander Watson, ‘Voluntary Enlistment in the Great War: a European Phenomenon?’ and Stephen Miller, ‘British and Imperial Volunteers in the South African War’ in Krüger and Levson (eds.), *War Volunteering*, 163–188. See also Adrian Gregory, ‘British “War Enthusiasm” in 1914: a Reassessment’, in Gail Braybon (ed.), *Evidence, History and the Great War* (Oxford, 2003), 79–80.

⁷³ Elizabeth Roberts, *‘Freedom, Faction, Fame and Blood’: British Soldiers of Conscience in Greece, Spain and Finland* (Brighton, 2010).

there is a clear genealogy across these examples, Roberts' approach revealed few useful comparative insights, highlighting the methodological difficulties in comparisons across long periods and diverse contexts. More recently, interest has emerged among political scientists, driven by the role of Islamic foreign fighters in recent conflicts. David Malet has been the most explicit in exploring historical parallels of the contemporary phenomenon, yet from a historical perspective his methodology and analysis appears limited.⁷⁴ Even on questions of interest to political scientists and historians alike, such as what drives individuals to volunteer overseas, conclusions rely on existing secondary literature, which the comparative framework did little to enhance.

Nir Arielli has driven a comparative research agenda forward with more success. Based on more substantial knowledge of case studies such as Spain and the Israeli War of Independence, Arielli was better placed to leverage broader comparisons.⁷⁵ This has allowed for greater insight into questions such as the relationship between foreign fighters and their home states, a question that in the Spanish case has often been dominated by narratives of victimisation on the part of volunteers.⁷⁶ Arielli shows that the relationship was far more complex, with states viewing foreign fighters as a potential tool as well as a threat, which might allow intervention in conflicts while retaining plausible deniability, meaning that laws against volunteering overseas were rarely enforced absolutely.⁷⁷ This theme is explored in Chapter Six, examining encounters between the Scottish volunteers and the British state, with particular regard to their participation in the Second World War.

⁷⁴ David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civic Conflicts* (Oxford, 2013).

⁷⁵ Nir Arielli, *From Byron to bin Laden: A History of Foreign War Volunteers* (Cambridge, 2018); 'Induced to Volunteer? The Predicament of Jewish Communists in Palestine and the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 46:4 (2011), 854–70; 'When are foreign volunteers useful? Israel's transnational soldiers in the war of 1948 re-examined', *Journal of Military History* 78:2 (2014), 703–24.

⁷⁶ This is most pronounced in English-speaking contexts. E.g. Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 417–40; Petrou, *Renegades*, 174–7; Carroll, *Odyssey*, 250–64; Gray, *Homage*, 205–8.

⁷⁷ Arielli, *From Byron to Bin Laden*, 121–50.

Methods and Sources

An overarching goal of this thesis has been to construct a 'history from below' of the International Brigades, exploring the lived experience of ordinary volunteers, including Spaniards, and identifying where their needs came into conflict with the International Brigades' leaders. This formulation is not unproblematic, and it is acknowledged that the categories of 'ordinary volunteers' and 'leadership' were flexible and overlapping, and certain individuals might be considered to fall into either category at different points in time, or even simultaneously – a dedicated Party member, for instance, might align him or herself with political leadership but share gripes about military life. As such, the 'leadership' is used throughout to denote those seeking to support and enforce the institutional perspective of the International Brigades at a given moment. The needs of 'history from below' also necessitate using appropriate methodological approaches to different sources and questions, and the thesis draws on fields as varied as musicology, gender studies and intelligence history to explore aspects of the volunteering experience. As such, with the exception of particular methodologies that underpin the thesis as a whole, methods are discussed in context as necessary rather than here.

Locating Spanish perspectives on the International Brigades, discussed in Chapter Five, represented the most substantial archival challenge, particularly as existing accounts of the International Brigades – especially of the Scots – have made relatively little use of Spanish archives. In particular, the *Archivo General Militar, Avila* (AGMA) and *Archivo General de Guerra Civil Española* (AGGCE) in Salamanca, proved useful for this study. The latter is a particularly strange collection, with its genesis as a Francoist archive containing an eclectic range of material captured during the Spanish Civil War. As noted by James Matthews, the Spanish Republican Army's Political Commissariat preserved a great deal of material relating to ordinary soldiers' morale and concerns, which was of great

use here.⁷⁸ The Avila archive presents a particularly rich source of such material, but it is understandably not structured around the International Brigades. Rather, the bulk of useful information came not from documentation regarding the International Brigades themselves, but that relating to their parent units in the Republican Army. Nationalist military and intelligence service records offered further perspectives, and future work dealing specifically with the International Brigades through their opponents' eyes might be especially fruitful. Alternative perspectives were also found in the *Conferación Nacional del Trabajo* archives at the International Institute for Social History, which preserve an institutional perspective very different from either the Republican or Comintern hierarchies.

British Government records supply further alternative perspectives. Some of these records, particularly those generated by the Foreign Office, are familiar to historians of the British contingent, although they remain a useful source. More vital for this account have been Security Service records, many of which have only recently been made public. Few complete personal files relating to Scottish volunteers have been preserved. Crucially, however, I was able to discover important new records relating to the volunteers. Although most personal files were destroyed, the card index to these files was retained, each providing a brief case history. However, aside from a handful of digitised examples, these cards had been wrongly catalogued on release, and the full files were only made available after I petitioned the National Archives after noticing discrepancies between catalogue and digitised copies.⁷⁹ Aside from supplying missing biographical information, these files provide substantial new insight into Security Service treatment of the volunteers, particularly during the Second World War.

The Comintern's archives, held at the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), were likely the single most valuable resource for this study.

⁷⁸ James Matthews, *Reluctant Warriors: Republican Popular Army and Nationalist Army Conscripts in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (Oxford, 2012), 12.

⁷⁹ These files are now correctly catalogued, and are found in TNA, KV 5/117–31.

Their use here reflects two major developments since their initial release in the early 1990s. Much use of this archive has been driven by a revisionist agenda, focusing heavily on exploring political repression.⁸⁰ While this archive certainly addresses such questions, it also offers substantial insight into the volunteers and their experiences, and these records have been used throughout this account in a broad variety of contexts. Their use in this way has been underpinned by the digitisation of many records relating to the International Brigades, alongside a great deal of other material relating to national Communist Parties.⁸¹ This meant that rather than focused searches through poorly indexed files, I was able to undertake a broader, slower search for relevant material. Even so, there remains a great deal to be discovered in this archive, especially as further segments are digitised.

The Comintern records, as with other collections such as the International Brigade Archive at the Marx Memorial Library in London, need to be understood as having distinct institutional purposes. There are some suspicious silences in these archives, which seem to indicate the deliberate avoidance of certain topics.⁸² It is possible to overstate the totality of such efforts – plenty of records survive that might well have been culled – but it must be acknowledged that archival gaps may sometimes be deliberate. This also applies to a certain degree to personal papers of volunteers collected by the Marx Memorial Library. With the archival project managed initially by the International Brigade Association, those who had broken with this organisation are less likely to be represented in these archives, meaning that material conforming to certain narratives is likely to be overrepresented.

The nature of the Scottish contingent mitigates against the widespread use of correspondence and memoirs in any case. The only Scottish Spanish Civil War

⁸⁰ Peter Carroll, 'The Myth of the Moscow Archives', *Science & Society* 68:3 (2004), 337–41.

⁸¹ The digital archive, available in Russian as part of the 'Documents of the Soviet Era' project, is hosted by the Federal Archive Agency, and can be accessed at <<http://sovdoc.rusarchives.ru/>>.

⁸² For instance, Allan Kemp, the only Scot executed for desertion, has a suspiciously empty file, with the only archival confirmation of his execution coming from division-level records. 'KEMP, A', RGASPI, 545/6/158/48–9; Orden Especial del Día, 11 January 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/4/103.

memoir, by Battalion Political Commissar Bob Cooney, was published only in 2015.⁸³ This reflects a distinct tendency in archival preservation and publication, which has favoured volunteers who were well-educated, middle-class or had important roles in the British Battalion. Most Scottish correspondence preserved in the Marx Memorial Library, for instance, pertains to senior Communist Party figures. In Scottish archives, the most extensive personal deposits relate to John Dunlop and Tom Murray, neither typical volunteers. Some gaps can be filled from other sources – some correspondence was preserved in Moscow and elsewhere – but this was by no means universal. While these kind of personal sources provide valuable insight, this thesis relies on them to a lesser extent than many existing accounts. This is in some ways an advantage – not only does it encourage a more creative methodological approach in places, it also helps avoid issues stemming from an unrepresentative source base.

This lack of contemporary personal sources led to a greater reliance on oral history. No interviews were conducted as part of this thesis, but Scotland has been well served when it comes to oral testimony. Aside from Scots' participation in wider oral history projects, the work of Ian MacDougall in seeking out and interviewing Scottish International Brigaders has proven invaluable.⁸⁴ However, the nature of these projects – usually in the 'recovery' mould of oral history, with the goal of preserving voices that might otherwise have been lost to history – gave participants wide scope to tell their stories as they saw fit.⁸⁵ Interviewees were rarely pressed to discuss aspects of their service that did not reflect the image they wanted to convey. Shame, demoralisation and other negative emotions found correspondingly little place

⁸³ Bob Cooney, *Proud Journey* (London, 2015).

⁸⁴ Ian MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War; Voices from the Hunger Marches* (Edinburgh, 1990); *Voices from War and Some Labour Struggles* (Edinburgh, 1995). Dr MacDougall was kind enough to allow me access to the original unedited transcripts, but the light editing touch employed made it preferable to use the more-accessible published versions.

⁸⁵ For discussion of the predominance of 'reconstructive' approaches in Scotland, and MacDougall's work in particular, see Angela Bartie and Arthur McIvor, 'Oral history in Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review* 92 (2013), 113–26.

in their narratives. This could be personal – such as a failing marriage’s role in deciding to volunteer – or collective, avoiding or downplaying the failures of comrades who deserted, committed crimes or lost heart.

As with any oral history project, interviewee narratives need to be regarded as a product of a particular moment. Most interviews took place during the 1970s and 1980s, a period that saw the democratisation of Spain – and thereby the vindication of the volunteers’ stated aims – as well as heightened class and labour conflict in Britain.⁸⁶ Moreover, volunteers’ testimony could not help but be affected by the mythology surrounding the International Brigades, especially as these grand narratives embody such a heroic, positive vision of their actions. In some cases, the recordings’ public nature – notably those conducted at Loughborough University in 1976 – threw the collective shaping and maintenance of these narratives into sharp relief.⁸⁷ With interviewees given relatively free rein to fashion their testimony, these oral histories are often best understood as reflecting how the ex-volunteers came to view themselves.⁸⁸ While discussion of motivations is the most obvious such moment of self-fashioning, similar points can be made about other established narratives, as discussed further in Chapter Six. However, these tendencies should not be regarded as deliberate distortion, or a sign that interviewees were not trustworthy or were unable to remember events accurately. Many evidenced accurate recollections of places, people and events, with errors tending towards minor confusion rather than fabrication.⁸⁹ Rather, their use required sensitivity towards emphasis, omission and language.

⁸⁶ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 18. See also Ron Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History* (New York, 1991), 245.

⁸⁷ A recording of a group session is in TLS, MS, Tapes 228/A-B. Individual interviews sometimes referred back to narratives explored in this session, e.g. William Kelly, Tape 238.

⁸⁸ On ‘official’ narratives and individual testimony, see Josie McLennan, “‘I Wanted to be a Little Lenin’: Ideology and the German International Brigade Volunteers’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 41:2 (2006), 289–90.

⁸⁹ Given Spain’s importance in many volunteers’ lives, this is unsurprising. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 81.

Chapter Structure

This account is not structured as a chronological narrative, nor is it a military history of Scottish contributions to various battles. Those seeking either are well catered-for in existing history writing. Individual chapters are thesis-driven, structured across three broadly chronological sections: 'Scotland', 'Spain' and 'There, and Back Again', addressing in turn the volunteers' background and motivations, their experiences in Spain and their return to Britain. Aside from this basic structure, the underlying purpose of each chapter shifts midway through the thesis, with Chapters One to Three broadly aimed at addressing the extent that the 'Scottishness' of the volunteers mattered, while Chapters Four to Six instead using the Scots as a case study through which to address broader questions about the International Brigades.

'Scotland' contains Chapters One and Two, and asks why such relatively large numbers of Scots volunteered to fight in Spain. Chapter One establishes who the Scottish volunteers were and where they came from in Scotland. Beyond tying several specific features of the Scottish contingent to their later experiences in Spain, this chapter argues that far from a random or representative sample of the Scottish left, the Scottish volunteers can best be understood as representatives of a much smaller political sphere defined by association with the Communist Party. As taken up in Chapter Two, this changes historical appreciations of the decision to volunteer, which should be appreciated as the product of peer group and community dynamics as much as personal ideological belief. Moreover, this focus provides a more convincing explanation for heightened levels of recruitment in Scotland, where local political cultures encouraged community-focused tactics.

'Spain' examines the Scots' experiences during the civil war, with a particular focus on how their specific backgrounds – socially, culturally and politically – continued to matter throughout the conflict. Chapter Three explores the

continued relevance of Scottishness in the International Brigades, despite Scots not serving in a separate unit. Drawing on the previous section's conclusions, it is argued that many personal networks survived the journey to Spain. These manifested themselves as small, unofficial groupings within the British Battalion, seeing Scots cluster together where possible. Moreover, they formed the basis of information-sharing networks across Spain and Scotland, serving a range of personal and political purposes. Chapter Four turns to the International Brigades' political cultures, examining how discourse was shaped and constrained, exploring the effects of demoralisation and disaffection and assessing the extent and limitations of repression. It argues for acknowledging gaps between intent, perception and reality when it came to political control of the International Brigades, while appreciating the nature of volunteers' political beliefs and how they might be challenged. Finally, Chapter Five examines transnational encounters between Scots and Spaniards. In highlighting the complexity of these relationships, it is argued that friction between international volunteers and Spaniards needs to be seen as a structural outcome of the International Brigades project, albeit one that was understood and partly mitigated on both sides.

The final, and shortest section 'There, and Back Again' deals with the volunteers' return home. Chapter Six charts the relationship between the Scottish veterans and the British state, challenging the common narrative that International Brigade veterans were barred from participating in the British war effort due to their service in Spain. It is argued that discrimination against International Brigade veterans cannot be distinguished from broader anti-communist measures, suggesting that ex-volunteers were not special targets of state intervention, as has generally been depicted in history writing. Finally, a short epilogue situates the thesis within the context of post-war narratives about the International Brigades and efforts to commemorate their service in Scotland.

Across these chapters, this thesis seek to challenge the way that histories of the International Brigades have been written, from who the volunteers were and how they were recruited, to how their experiences in Spain were shaped and

understood, to the relationship between foreign fighters and the nation state. In doing so, it is hoped to elevate the Scottish contingent from their status as historiographical afterthoughts to an integral part of understanding the international phenomenon that was the Spanish Civil War.

Section One: Scotland

Chapter One: The Volunteers

The most distinctive characteristic of Scottish participation in the International Brigades lies in the disproportionately large representation of Scots among British volunteers, and any account dealing with them must address the fundamental question of why this was so. The failure to convincingly do so has been a weakness of the limited existing accounts of Scottish involvement in the Spanish Civil War, and the question has received next to no attention elsewhere, even in a purely British context. This issue is addressed here and in the subsequent chapter by exploring who the Scottish volunteers were and why they enlisted to fight in Spain. This particular chapter concentrates on the Scots in a collective sense, identifying the areas in which their lives bore similarities, intersected with each other and diverged. Richard Baxell's work on British volunteers provides a crucial point of reference, as it rests on a detailed examination of demographic factors across Britain.¹ While Baxell's figures are improved upon here, thanks to the smaller sample under consideration and availability of new sources, the goal is to go beyond marginal improvements in accuracy and instead redefine the way the International Brigades are collectively perceived in Scotland and elsewhere. Rather than a disparate group of individuals who were thrown together once in Spain, the International Brigade volunteers should instead be seen instead as a relatively cohesive group even before they left home. In the Scottish case, the volunteers clustered along the intersection of class, geography and politics.² While there were inevitable

¹ Richard Baxell, *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2004), 8–24.

² While other places saw similar clustering, it often took place along different lines depending on context. In South Wales, for instance, connections within the mining industry were considerably more important. Lewis Mates, 'Durham and South Wales Miners and the Spanish Civil War', *Twentieth Century British History* 17:3 (2006), 374–5.

exceptions, the bulk of Scots who fought in Spain can be seen as coming from a recognisable and specific community.

This argument contradicts much of the established literature on the International Brigades, which often emphasises the heterodox nature of the volunteers and their beliefs and backgrounds.³ There are several reasons for this, not least because it was politically useful at the time for the Communist Party to emphasise the volunteers' pluralism and diversity.⁴ However, the more fundamental reason that the cohesiveness of the bulk of recruits has been overlooked is the artificial prominence of non-conforming British volunteers. These might be termed 'individualists' – those for whom fighting in Spain was a very personal choice, and whose motivation and decision to volunteer was shaped almost entirely by their particular circumstances, for any number of reasons. 'Individualists' were more likely to come from middle- or upper-class backgrounds and held a wider variety of ideological views. As such, they were most prominent in the conflict's early months, not least because they required less help getting to Spain.⁵ Although this grouping is relatively prominent in the primary and secondary source base, largely because they included a number of – generally English – artists and intellectuals, their actual numbers were small.⁶ Within the Scottish contingent, they were practically unknown, a phenomenon underscored by the absence of Scots in accounts that focus on artistic and literary engagement with the Spanish Civil War.⁷ Instead, the bulk of the Scots came from political communities and networks dominated by the CPGB, of which they were often members themselves. For this group, volunteering was not a choice made in isolation, and as such cannot be understood as purely the product of an internalised, individual process. Within the British Battalion,

³ According to Baxell, 'the reasons lying behind the decisions to volunteer for Spain are as wide and as diverse as the volunteers themselves.' Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 30. See also Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 1997), 126.

⁴ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 14–16.

⁵ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 48–9.

⁶ On the disproportionate attention paid to such volunteers, see Richard Baxell, 'Myths of the International Brigades', *Ayer* 91:1–2 (2014), 13–17.

⁷ E.g. Hugh Ford, *A Poet's War: British Poets and the Spanish Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1965); Valentine Cunningham, *Spanish Front: Writers on the Civil War* (Oxford, 1986).

these volunteers might be termed a silent majority – they left behind or preserved fewer personal sources, and as such their presence in historical writing is muted. Nonetheless, they made up the vast majority of those who went to Spain.

To support this claim, this chapter utilises a database measuring key biographical variables across the volunteering contingent, including ages, political and trade union affiliations, occupations and points of origin, as well as other information relating to their service in Spain. It has been constructed using archival and other primary material relating to the International Brigades, most commonly British Security Service and Foreign Office documents held at The National Archives, the internal documents of the International Brigades from the archives of the Comintern and lists compiled at the International Brigade Archive at the Marx Memorial Library. This information is supplemented where possible using oral testimony, contemporary newspapers and other archival material including Spanish medical records, volunteers' letters and the records of various interested organisations. While detail is uneven across the entire sample of volunteers, it proved possible to measure each variable for a substantial majority of volunteers.⁸

Which individuals to count in this database is perhaps the single most significant methodological question facing this study. Several key criteria were established for inclusion. First, it was decided to focus on those who served specifically for the International Brigades. This meant discounting many of the Scottish medical personnel in Spain, who were naturally better represented in the independent 'Scottish Ambulance Unit' than the London-based Spanish Medical Aid Committee mission that was incorporated into the International

⁸ Owing to this fragmentary source base, it was not considered appropriate to embark on complex statistical analyses. Another approach was taken by Ariel Lambe, by sampling a single source base – Comintern personnel files – and comparing it with the 1931 Cuban census. While nominally allowing for more complex statistical analyses, this was not considered to offer sufficient analytical insight to justify the limitations in scope, nor were the Comintern files considered to be internally consistent samples in and of themselves, for reasons explored in greater depth in Chapter Four. Ariel Lambe, *Cuban Antifascism and the Spanish Civil War* (PhD Thesis: Columbia University, 2014), 73–158.

Brigades. This choice has disadvantages, chiefly in that it reduces the diversity of perspectives and characters engaged with. Only one woman – Annie Murray – meets these inclusion criteria. Only one other Scotswoman sought to enlist in the International Brigades, Kay Welton, who wrote to Edinburgh communist Tom Murray asking him to take her with him to Spain, explicitly as a ‘fighter’ and not ‘in a nursing line.’⁹ Tom Murray’s reply is not known, but there is no indication Welton went to Spain. However, including different perspectives for the sake of diversity would miss the point of the analysis presented here: that the International Brigades’ very lack of diversity offers insight into their recruitment.¹⁰

In several cases, individuals volunteered but did not actually see service, as they changed their minds or were rejected for various reasons. They have been counted here if they succeeded in leaving Britain, on the basis that this represented a concrete attempt to enlist and follow through with their decision, and are therefore still relevant to discussions about recruitment for Spain.¹¹ Each individual also required independent verification, except in the few cases where there is good reason that they appeared in few records, such as if they died shortly after reaching Spain.¹² Nearly all of those included have had their service confirmed in at least two independent sources. This measure was adopted to help prevent double entries – some served under a *nom de guerre*, and therefore appear under different names in different records – as well as

⁹ Welton to Murray, 10 March 1938, MML, Box D-4, File My/8.

¹⁰ On broader Scottish involvement in Spain, see Daniel Gray, *Homage to Caledonia* (Edinburgh, 2008), 92–5, 155–76. On ILP volunteers, see Christopher Hall, *‘Not Just Orwell’: The Independent Labour Party Volunteers and the Spanish Civil War* (Barcelona, 2009). For Scottish nurses and other female participants, Angela Jackson, *British Women and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2002). On Glasgow Anarchist Ethel MacDonald in particular, Chris Dolan, *An Anarchist’s Story: The Life of Ethel MacDonald* (Edinburgh, 2009). For the Scottish Ambulance Unit, Jim Fyrrth, *The Signal Was Spain: The Spanish Aid Movement in Britain, 1936–1939* (London, 1986), 181–91.

¹¹ There are only a handful of such cases, namely Andrew Marshall, A. Henderson, J. Docherty, J. Prior, John Paterson and R. Smart, identified as such in ‘List of Scots in Spain (Returned)’, MML, Box C, File 1/5.

¹² For example, J. Docherty, listed as being rejected on medical grounds after reaching Paris. His swift return meant that confirmation in Spanish records was impossible, and surveillance records unlikely. ‘List of Scots in Spain (Returned)’, MML.

individuals who were mistakenly thought to have been in Spain.¹³ Finally, usefully defining a 'Scot' is far from straightforward. In arguing that heightened Scottish recruitment was a product of very local circumstances rather than innate Scottish exceptionalism, it is difficult to include individuals who were not directly affected by these factors. As such, there are two categories of 'Scot' considered here. The first are those who were born and lived only in Scotland prior to the Spanish Civil War. The second emigrated either to or from Scotland, but who were demonstrably integrated into Scottish political networks and cultures. Those born in Scotland, but whose main political experiences happened elsewhere, have been excluded. While this definition is not perfect – adequate personal histories are not available in all cases – it allows discussion of Scottish distinctiveness to avoid romanticism.

Using this database, this chapter explores various demographic variables, examining the commonalities and differences among the Scottish volunteers. It begins by establishing the number of Scottish volunteers, as well as examining factors such as age and occupation. The focus then moves to the geographic distribution of volunteers, and lastly to their political affiliations and adherence. Taken together, the data shows that clusters of volunteers can be found within very specific communities organised along the intersections between human and physical geography and politics. Of notable significance is the fact these communities were well-defined and made up relatively small sections of the general population. This means that Scottish volunteers should not be considered as a tiny minority of the Scottish population or even the Scottish working class, but as making up a substantial proportion of the small social-political sphere from whence they came.

¹³ For one confirmed *nom de guerre*, see 'SMITH Hugh @ Hugh SLOAN', TNA, KV 5/130.

Numbers

Despite the limited historiography dealing with the Scottish volunteers, estimates of their numbers have varied considerably. Tom Buchanan gave the figure as 437, while Iain MacDougall estimated 'about 500.'¹⁴ Baxell settled on a total of 549, which was adopted by Gray without further discussion.¹⁵ This variation in figures reflects methodological problems that have plagued many accounts of the International Brigades. Earlier imprecision reflected uneven access to sources, yet even more recent attempts are still undermined by the inherent difficulty of defining identity in the 1930s.¹⁶ Complex and overlapping local and national identities, muddled further by migration, make this a non-trivial task. In an attempt to resolve this longstanding issue, Antonio Celada and Daniel Pastor Garcia sought to establish the most appropriate single or dual national identity for each English-speaking volunteer.¹⁷ Rather than resolving the question, however, their work provides further evidence of the difficulty in enumerating the volunteers on a large scale. The detail provided for each volunteer is scarce, and a combination of insufficient source material for each entry and classification errors led to significant distortion. Approximately one fifth of the Scottish volunteers are either missing entirely or have demonstrably false information provided, while many others include information for which there is no apparent basis. Typical of such errors or inconsistencies is the entry for Robert Beggs, correctly listed as Glaswegian but classified as English, or George Shaw, who was listed as a dual national (Scottish and United States) for

¹⁴ Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, 126; Iain MacDougall, *Voices From the Spanish Civil War* (Edinburgh, 1986), 3.

¹⁵ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 159n; Gray, *Homage*, 1.

¹⁶ Baxell used similar (although not identical) archival sources as this study, although it remains unclear how he defined volunteers' points of origin. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 159n-160n.

¹⁷ Antonio Celada and Daniel Pastor Garcia, *Los brigadistas de habla inglesa y la Guerra Civil Española* (Madrid, 2002).

which there is no supporting evidence.¹⁸ They also contain entries which proved to be doubles of other individuals, or whose service cannot be independently confirmed.

The approach used here is designed to address these concerns by adopting a more rigorous approach that allows for difficulties caused by categorisation. By applying the criteria discussed above, this account considers that 520 Scottish volunteers left Britain with the intention of joining the International Brigades. By relaxing either the definition of 'Scottish' or the requirement for independent verification, many more might conceivably be included. It could certainly be argued that many of those excluded felt some affinity for Scottish culture, or identified as Scottish. However, without demonstrable exposure to the Scottish socio-political cultures discussed in this chapter, it would be misleading to claim these individuals as evidence for the thesis presented here. With confirmed Scots alone making up at least 22 percent of the British contingent – double their share of Britain's population – inflating this number is unnecessary in any case.

Age

Although volunteers were supposed to be over 21 and under 40 years old, and ideally between 25 and 35, in practice there was considerable flexibility.¹⁹ Any attempt to enforce this rule was undermined by individuals' willingness to lie about their age, often aided and abetted by their peers. Stephen Fullarton, eighteen when he volunteered in April 1938, recalled discussing this with local Party organiser George Campbell.

He says, 'you better say you're 19' 'OK, I'll be 19 if they ask.' They did ask. They told me... 'You'll be going down to London now and they'll see you in London and you better tell them ye're 20 because 19 sounds a bit

¹⁸ George Shaw himself made it clear that aside from service during the First World War, he had never previously lived outside Glasgow. See 'Autobiography of George Shaw', 25 April 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/199/26.

¹⁹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 16–18.

young' 'Aye OK I'll be 20.' Well, when I went to London my age increased from 20 to 21: 'You better say you're 21.' And when I got to Paris that was me 21.²⁰

Judging by Fullarton's enlistment paperwork, by the time he reached Spain he had had several more such conversations, eventually giving his age as 23.²¹ Similarly, the oldest known Scot, Francis Casey, was 53 years old when he joined the British Battalion in December 1936, but only admitted to being 42. The youngest, sixteen year-old Robert McGuire, claimed to be 21 when enlisting.²²

Age	Scottish (%)	British, inc. Scots (%)	French (%)	American (%)
Under 21	5.3	4.2	2.6	38.0
21-25	26.3	32.2	24.8	
26-30	26.3	23.6	32.6	26.0
31-35	21.1	20.4	21.9	36.0
36-40	12.9	12.3	13.7	
Over 40	8.0	7.3	4.4	

*Table 1.1: Age ranges of volunteers in Scottish, British, French and American contingents.*²³

The widespread practice of creative imprecision with ages hinders meaningful comparisons across groups. Baxell identified several cases of volunteers lying about their age, but a systematic attempt to correct such 'errors' appears to have been impossible at the time.²⁴ As this account was able to catch many more creative age-related claims, comparisons are less useful than they might be. While the slight variation between groups visible in the table above could conceivably be meaningful – for example, higher proportions of older volunteers might point to a drop in acceptance standards – methodological inconsistency makes such arguments difficult to substantiate.

²⁰ Fullarton in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 290.

²¹ '7.4.38–14.4.38', RGASPI, 545/6/91/169.

²² 'Arrivals during and before Dec 1936' and 'Arrived prior to 10.1.37' RGASPI, 545/6/91/57, 82; 'MCGUIRE, Robert' and 'CASEY Francis', TNA, KV 5/119, 127.

²³ For Scottish figures, see Appendix A. For the British, see Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 16. The American data comes from a 1937 roster, which is problematic in light of changing age patterns over time. Peter Carroll, *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (Stanford, 1994), 15–16. French data is from Remi Skoutelsky, 'L'engagement des volontaires français en Espagne républicaine', *Le Mouvement social* 181 (1997), 11.

²⁴ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 16–18.

Age	Dec 1936 (%)	Jan 1937 (%)	Feb 1937 (%)	Mar-Apr 1937 (%)	May-Jun 1937 (%)	Jul-Aug 1937 (%)	Sep-Oct 1937 (%)	Nov-Dec 1937 (%)	Jan-Feb 1938 (%)	Mar-Apr 1938 (%)
Under 21	4.6	6.4	0	0	0	7.1	2.9	9.4	7.4	9.1
21-25	20.2	22.2	13.6	21.1	37.5	32.1	28.6	50.0	31.5	27.3
26-30	23.9	19.2	22.7	52.6	33.3	35.7	25.7	18.8	25.9	29.5
31-35	21.1	26.3	22.7	10.5	29.2	0	20.0	18.8	18.5	27.3
36-40	14.7	14.1	22.7	10.5	0	21.4	11.4	3.1	14.8	6.8
Over 40	15.6	11.1	18.2	5.3	0	3.6	11.4	0	1.9	0

Table 1.2: Ages of Scottish volunteers arriving between December 1936 and April 1938.²⁵

Within the Scottish sample, volunteers grew steadily younger as the conflict lengthened. Prior to May 1937, fewer than 30 percent of volunteers in any given period were under 25, compared to at least 31.5 percent from May onwards, including nearly 60 percent in November and December 1937. This change likely reflects shifting attitudes on the part of recruiters. Despite the optimistic claim by one British commander that ‘there were men of over fifty who did as well as those half their years’, older volunteers often struggled to cope with strenuous demands of military service, with many relegated to rear duties.²⁶ Concerns about the suitability of new recruits were raised in reports from Spain as early as February 1937.²⁷ By mid-1937, with the number of volunteers unfit for frontline service rapidly outstripping the number of useful jobs for them, preventing overage recruits became a higher priority.²⁸ The concern was also financial; the Communist Party had promised to support volunteers’ dependants while they were in Spain, and subsidising the presence of volunteers who were unable to contribute meaningfully to the war effort was

²⁵ See Appendix A.

²⁶ Tom Wintringham, *English Captain* (London, 1939), 115. The increasingly weary attitude towards older volunteers was evident in Matthew Murphy’s rejection in February 1938: ‘43 years old. He would not be sent to the line because of his age, and there is no room for him in the rear. Sent home’, ‘MURPHY, Matthew’, RGASPI, 545/6/176/33.

²⁷ E.g. Kerrigan to Pollitt, 6 February 1937, MML, Box C, File 10.

²⁸ Paynter to Pollitt, 9 June 1937, MML, Box C, File 13; ‘Observations’, 22 December 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/87/39–40.

proving a substantial burden, particularly as repatriation was heavily restricted.²⁹ As such, it is unsurprising that younger recruits became preferred.

Occupation

Occupational data is available for 417 of the Scots in Spain, allowing for a relatively complete picture. A bare handful might be considered professionals – two chemists, one teacher, one accountant and three journalists. Even these individuals were hardly models of bourgeois respectability. The accountant was still a trainee when he volunteered, while one chemist had recently been fired due to his communist sympathies.³⁰ The teacher was actually working as a ‘salesman’ when he volunteered, suggesting teaching was going poorly, while the journalists tended to have worked for the Communist Party newspaper, the *Daily Worker*.³¹ Beyond these quasi-professionals, few were non-manual workers: eleven clerical workers of various descriptions, two music hall performers and two nurses. The rest, some 394 individuals or 94.5 percent of those for whom information is available, worked with their hands.

Patterns of trade union membership confirm this trend. 170 Scots were known to be trade union members, compared to Baxell’s figure of approximately 500 for Britain as a whole, although this higher proportion is again likely due to the broader source base consulted here. The two samples are generally similar. The Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), for instance, was the most common affiliation for both British and Scottish volunteers, unsurprisingly given that the TGWU was one of Britain’s largest unions at the time.³² Some differences do emerge. Mining unions were the second-largest grouping in Scotland; in England they did not make the top ten. There were fewer Scottish

²⁹ ‘Observations’, 22 December 1937, RGASPI.

³⁰ Dunlop and Drever in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 117, 277–8.

³¹ ‘BURNS, Timothy’, TNA KV 5/118; ‘Transport of 2–4–37’, RGASPI, 545/6/91/100. For journalists, see for example ‘John Paterson: Signed statement’, January 28 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/183/79–81.

³² Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement* (Cambridge, 1991), 10.

members of the National Union of Seamen, while Boilermakers and Railwaymen were better represented. However, the similarities are more striking than the differences.

It is difficult, however, to locate any particular occupational cluster beyond the dominance of manual labour. No industry stands out as having supplied especially disproportionate numbers of volunteers, especially when placed within a British context. Baxell compiled the most extensive list of the British volunteers' occupations, although as he only covered a minority of the British contingent, direct comparisons are not useful.³³ However, it is possible to compare the proportion of occupations by sector.

Occupational Sector	Scotland (%)	Britain, including Scotland (%)
Manufacturing and Construction	37.6	30
Transport	20.6	22
Trades	11.5	20
Mining	16.5	9
Publishing	1.8	6
Professionals	1.2	6
Local Government	0.2	1
Arts and Crafts	0.9	1
Miscellaneous	9.7	4

*Table 1.3: Proportion of Scottish and British volunteers in occupational sectors.*³⁴

These figures still present certain difficulties. 51 individuals had two or more occupations listed in different sources.³⁵ This likely reflects the nature of employment in 1930s Britain, with individuals turning their hands to whatever work they could find, irrespective of experience or training. Many volunteers would have had to choose between stating their latest position and the job they were trained for.

³³ Baxell is imprecise about his sample size, but extrapolating from his figures gives approximately 1,000. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 21–2.

³⁴ For Scottish figures, see Appendix A. British figures from Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 22.

³⁵ With no basis for differentiating these sources, those with multiple occupations had each weighted equally.

More problematic is that the criteria by which Baxell divided these sectors were not made clear.³⁶ Numerous occupations are inherently ambiguous, such as carpentry – conceivably either part of ‘Trades’ or ‘Manufacturing and Construction’. There were also substantial numbers of Scots in the service industry, such as salesmen or waiters, who have no obvious place in Baxell’s calculations, and have been included here under Miscellaneous. Furthermore, the most common single occupation, ‘labourer’, defies precise categorisation, and it is unclear how they figured in Baxell’s calculations. As such, the only firm conclusion is that Scots had more traditionally ‘working class’ occupations than the British overall, with Scots three times less likely to work in publishing, local government, arts or as a professional than the British average.³⁷ The disproportionate number of Scottish miners is also noteworthy, although not to the same extent as in Wales. According to Hywel Francis and Robert Stradling, between 99 and 110 Welsh miners served in Spain, representing two thirds of the Welsh contingent, compared to 55 Scottish miners comprising a sixth of the Scots.³⁸ This, along with Scotland’s more dispersed coalfields, contrasts with the exceptional mobilisation along regional-occupational lines seen in Wales. However, Scots and Welsh together made up three quarters of all miners who volunteered. Clearly, English miners were considerably less willing to go to Spain than their Welsh and Scottish comrades, pointing to substantial differences in coalfield political cultures across the three nations.³⁹

³⁶ He did not, for instance, use the same categories as the 1931 census occupational reports. Census of England and Wales, 1931, Classification of industries (1934), 1–2.

³⁷ Some of this difference can be explained by differences in sector size between Scotland and the rest of Britain, A. K. Cairncross, *The Scottish Economy* (Cambridge, 1954), 41. However, the number of Scottish volunteers working in non-manual categories was still small compared to Scotland as a whole. Census of Scotland, 1931. Vol. III Occupations and industries (1934), xiv.

³⁸ Hywel Francis, *Miners Against Fascism* (London, 1987), 95; Robert Stradling, *Wales and the Spanish Civil War* (Cardiff, 2004), 104.

³⁹ Mates discusses these differences in the context of South Wales and Durham. Mates, ‘Durham and South Wales Miners’, 375–86.

Unemployment

It is unclear how many individuals were actually employed in the occupations they claimed. Many appear to have listed either a customary trade or a previous position instead of admitting to being unemployed. As discussed below, approximately one fifth of all volunteers indicated some connection to the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM), indicating that a substantial number of Scots faced chronic unemployment in the years prior to Spain.⁴⁰ This was certainly the case elsewhere, with several sources estimating that between an eighth and a quarter of British volunteers were unemployed.⁴¹ However, as interwar unemployment was particularly severe in Scotland, it is probable that the Scottish proportion is higher than the average.⁴² Moreover, the particular link between communism and volunteering – explored further below – also indicates that higher numbers of Scottish volunteers were unemployed. The Scottish district of the Communist Party was singled out as having the highest – ‘over 50%’ – number of unemployed members in October 1936.⁴³ This figure improved only slowly, with 45 percent of Scottish communists still unemployed by November 1937.⁴⁴ Even by June 1938, the figure was 43 percent.⁴⁵ Compared to other large districts such as London, where just 185 out of 4806 members were unemployed by April 1937, or Lancashire where the figure was 16 percent in November 1937, this points to

⁴⁰ Not all unemployed were necessarily members of the NUWM, and several were ‘ex’ members. E.g. Allan Craig, ‘Arrived various dates prior to 10.1.37’, RGASPI, 545/6/91/58.

⁴¹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 23–4, 30. See also Wintringham, *English Captain*, 330; K. Watkins, *Britain Divided: The Effect of the Spanish Civil War on British Political Opinion* (London, 1963), 283–99.

⁴² Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Scotland 1900-2015* (Edinburgh, 2016), 50–1; William Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800-Present* (Edinburgh, 1999), 189–95.

⁴³ ‘Information Material Concerning Party Organisation and Cadres’, 17 December 1936, RGASPI, 495/14/215/29–32.

⁴⁴ ‘Report on some main tactical, organisational and cadre problems confronting the CPGB’, December 1937, RGASPI, 495/20/91/35.

⁴⁵ ‘Report on Scottish District’, 3 June 1938, RGASPI, 495/14/260/56.

the Scottish contingent containing a much higher proportion of unemployed volunteers.⁴⁶

Previous accounts have generally been content to note the apparent connection between unemployment activism and volunteering without considering the precise ways that it actually shaped recruitment patterns for Spain.⁴⁷ Yet as only a tiny minority of Britain's unemployed joined the International Brigades, it is difficult to tie this mass phenomenon to successful recruitment directly.

Unemployment was not necessarily a direct motivation for enlistment – representing Spain as an 'escape' from the ennui of unemployment is overly simplistic.⁴⁸ Rather, unemployment gave the Communist Party space in which to build a political movement based on the NUWM, a space that was often uncontested by the official labour movement or Labour Party.⁴⁹ This influenced not just the CPGB's ability to expand and attract recruits, but also qualitatively shaped the way the Party operated and helped it develop new capabilities that proved useful when recruiting and managing the International Brigades.

Campaigns against unemployment exerted a profound influence on the Communist Party's organisation in Scotland. Such was the reliance on unemployed members, Party leaders worried that many local branches were being run 'by an unemployed comrade who is generally not the most capable', while more capable candidates were 'employed and unable to give the necessary attention to the work.'⁵⁰ While this trend was encouraged by other factors – notably that CPGB members often faced victimisation in the workplace and official labour movement, discouraging those in employment from becoming open members – it is clear that years of relatively successful work

⁴⁶ 'Membership Report', April 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/239/197; 'Report on some main tactical, organisational and cadre problems', December 1937, RGASPI.

⁴⁷ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 42–3; Mates, *Spanish Civil War and the British Left*, 210; Gray, *Homage*, 25–6.

⁴⁸ E.g. Elizabeth Roberts, *'Freedom, Faction, Fame and Blood': British Soldiers of Conscience in Greece, Spain and Finland* (Brighton, 2010), 202.

⁴⁹ While Knox is justified in characterising the unemployed as 'fatalistic rather than radical', this overlooks the impact that even a small minority of the vast number of unemployed could have on what was a very small Communist movement. Knox, *Industrial Nation*, 13.

⁵⁰ 'Scottish District of the CPGB', RGASPI, 495/14/190/48–51.

with the chronically unemployed had shaped Party demographics by 1936. By offering a path to actively resist unemployment, and the deeply unpopular measures associated with government responses such as the Means Test, the Communist Party was able to effectively tap into community anger, which often manifested itself in collective action to thwart unwelcome government intrusion.⁵¹ By offering a holistic critique of the system failing many Scottish communities, and new forms of protest through the NUWM, the Communist Party was able to translate localised anger into a wider mobilisation.

By 1937, however, the NUWM was on its last legs. The improving economic situation undermined its relevance, and the CPGB leadership frankly discussed its continued future.⁵² However, the NUWM had already served its purpose from the perspective of this study. As Malcolm Petrie has argued, the NUWM was noteworthy in that it sought to contest ownership of public space in a continuation of traditions of popular protest, taking on added importance for a demographic for whom newer, more genteel political norms held little attraction.⁵³ As such, it helped bring in a new generation of activists who were intensely motivated and angry, and had no stable employment, family or even fixed abode limiting their mobility.⁵⁴ Although Party members were a minority in most NUWM branches, they tended to be in charge.⁵⁵ Glasgow NUWM activist Tom Fern, for example, recalled that out of 'about 200 members', 'a dozen' at most were communists – but 'they were the driving force.'⁵⁶ For the unemployed who wanted to play a greater role in the movement, the natural

⁵¹ Annmarie Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland, 1919–1939* (Edinburgh, 2010), 193–8.

⁵² By August 1937, it was considered to be 'largely bad' and even an 'obstacle' to organisation. Central Committee (CC) Meeting, 6 August 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/235/44.

⁵³ Malcolm Petrie, 'Public Politics and Traditions of Popular Protest: Demonstrations of the Unemployed in Dundee and Edinburgh, c.1921–1939', *Contemporary British History* 27:4 (2013), 505–6.

⁵⁴ The Means Test was calculated based on household income, so claiming benefits often meant leaving home. John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *The Slump: Britain in the Great Depression* (Harlow, 2010), 79–81.

⁵⁵ Although the totality of CPGB 'control' of the NUWM is debatable, the close organisational links are undeniable. Alan Campbell and John McIroy, 'The National Unemployed Workers' Movement and the Communist Party of Great Britain Revisited', *Labour History Review* 73:1 (2008), 61–88.

⁵⁶ Fern in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 138, see also 282, 335.

route to greater participation was through joining the Communist Party, developing the requisite social and political connections to receive training and responsibility. Michael Clarke of Greenock was forceful in his recollection of this process: 'I think – I don't think, I *know* – that the NUWM was a recruitin' ground for the Party.'⁵⁷ The result was an influx of relatively young individuals to the Communist Party, radicalised by their first-hand experiences of capitalism and with few fixed ties keeping them at home – characteristics that lent themselves to recruitment for Spain.

Beyond encouraging the recruitment of members who might be more open to joining the International Brigades, the NUWM also helped prepare them for service in Spain. The NUWM's campaigns stretched conceptual frontiers of political activism. Although much of their activity was local, their most famous undertakings were the Hunger Marches, which saw groups of unemployed marchers converge from across the country on a single destination. In the last large march, not coincidentally just as mass recruitment for the International Brigades got underway in November-December 1936, over 500 Scots marched on London.⁵⁸ Marches made activism mobile, altering the participants' perceptions of their ability to effect change outwith their immediate surroundings. It was also activism on the offensive. Rather than defending against government intrusions locally, appealing Means Test verdicts or complaining about conditions, marchers took the fight to where it could achieve the most, just as Spain could be understood as taking the anti-fascist struggle to its most important flashpoint.

The Hunger Marches also affected the CPGB's organisational capabilities, both real and perceived. The logistics of marshalling hundreds of marchers over a trek that lasted up to six weeks were complicated, and helped develop skills among the cadres who later took on military or political responsibilities in

⁵⁷ Clarke in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 164.

⁵⁸ MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 6.

Spain.⁵⁹ Specific lessons were learned – such as the necessity of medical examinations beforehand – that could be directly applied when recruiting volunteers for Spain.⁶⁰ Moreover, the success of the Hunger Marches helped develop faith in the Party itself. In being able to adequately clothe, feed, shelter and protect their charges, faith in the tactics and capabilities of communist leadership was reinforced among their followers. Among the most active NUWM members – those most likely to be drawn into the political orbit of the Communist Party itself, given the evident strength of their convictions as well as the opportunities for propagandising that a six-week march afforded – the Communist Party had developed strong foundations for a successful recruitment campaign for Spain.⁶¹

Class

As indicated by their occupations, Scottish volunteers were overwhelmingly of working class origins. While it is possible to list some Scots who did not fit this mould – such as David Mackenzie, a University of Edinburgh student – these examples are exceptions. Most estimates place the proportion of working-class volunteers in the British battalion as being between 80 and 90 percent, but given the preponderance of working-class volunteers among the Scottish and Welsh contingents, this suggests that most of this ten to twenty percent of middle- or upper-class volunteers were English.⁶² By comparison, the American contingent contained a somewhat higher proportion of professionals, intellectuals and students.⁶³

⁵⁹ Donald Renton, for instance, was secretary and organiser of the Edinburgh NUWM, leading their contingent in the 1936 Hunger March. He was made Company Commissar on arrival in Spain. Renton in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 20-1; 'RENTON, Donald', TNA, KV 5/130.

⁶⁰ MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 6.

⁶¹ During the 1936 march, propagandising was centred on Spain itself – especially the newly-formed International Brigades. Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 320.

⁶² Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 22; Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 155.

⁶³ A survey of 1225 American volunteers in Spain showed at least 290 coming from this sort of background. 'Professions', RGASPI, 545/3/455/148-52.

These class differences between the British national groups are reflected in the pattern of arrivals. Many middle-class, intellectual volunteers arrived in the early months of the war. These tended to be the 'individualists' alluded to in the introduction – those for whom going to Spain was a choice made in isolation from others, for chiefly personal reasons. For them, the cause and opportunity was enough, and further enabling factors unnecessary. Yet making such a decision required the means to see it through. There may have been working-class Scots with similar mentalities – George Drever, for instance, claimed to have tried to volunteer to fight in Abyssinia in 1935, an indication that he was perhaps looking for somewhere to fight rather than swept up by specific enthusiasm for Spain.⁶⁴ However, without money to pay fares, a passport or knowledge of international travel, most working-class volunteers were unable to journey to Spain before a route was established thanks to cooperation between the Comintern and British and French Communist Parties, who arranged travel, accommodation and fares.⁶⁵ Of the British volunteers trickling into Spain from August to November 1936, just seven percent were Scots. Once a route was established, the next three months saw Scots make up 42 percent of British arrivals. The Communist Party's aid must be seen as a crucial factor in allowing recruitment to take place on such a large scale, especially when it came to working-class volunteers.

Disparities in social composition among the different national groups in the English-speaking XV International Brigade had ramifications. Leadership composition came to reflect the varying proportions of middle- or upper-class volunteers in each national group. Americans came to dominate the higher ranks, to the chagrin of the other nationalities – an internal report written in 1938 acknowledged the failure to promote Canadian and Latin American officers, and the British too were forced to contend for adequate representation

⁶⁴ Drever in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 277.

⁶⁵ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 48–9.

at Brigade level.⁶⁶ Among the British, however, a similar process was underway, with English volunteers coming to dominate the higher ranks. That is not to say that Scots were completely passed over – Jock Cunningham was one of the Battalion’s most celebrated commanders, while George Aitken and Bob Cooney were both senior Political Commissars. However, the disproportionate number of Scottish volunteers was not matched by a disproportionate presence in leadership roles. Petrou made similar observations regarding the chiefly working-class Canadian contingent, which was often provided with middle-class American officers.⁶⁷

There are several reasons why rank and social background became connected in Spain. Middle- or upper-class volunteers were more likely to have participated in Officer Training Corps schemes at school or university, training which assumed relative importance given the scarcity of volunteers with substantial military leadership experience.⁶⁸ Educational background also played a role, particularly regarding language training. Few working-class recruits could speak a language other than English, a prized ability in the multinational environment of the International Brigades. The importance of Spanish in particular is readily apparent, and evidence suggests that working-class volunteers struggled to learn the language compared to better-educated individuals with prior knowledge of Romance languages.⁶⁹ Scots had particularly poor language skills. One document from January 1938 listed all British volunteers able to speak a second language; just four out of 76 were

⁶⁶ ‘Report on the political development of the XVth International Brigade’ and ‘Report on the work of the North Americans the XV Brigade’, 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/21/21–2, 61–2.

⁶⁷ Petrou, *Renegades*, 110–11.

⁶⁸ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 13. Only two Scots had OTC experience, John Ross of Edinburgh, an insurance clerk, and John Dunlop, a trainee accountant – neither typical backgrounds. Ross died soon after arriving in Spain, so it is unknown how this experience was regarded. Dunlop was selected for officer training in Spain and finished the conflict as a sergeant, although his officer school results indicated he ‘[could] become company commander’. ‘List of arrivals’, RGASPI, 545/6/91/139; Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 118; ‘Escuela Oficiales: Dunlop, John’, RGASPI, 545/6/126/77.

⁶⁹ John Dunlop, for instance, knew some French prior to Spain and became one of few Scots able to speak Spanish well. Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 140, 147–8.

Scottish.⁷⁰ Finally, the nature of the training available for officer candidates mitigated against the rapid promotion of working-class volunteers. Due in part to the chronic shortage of materiel, officer training was heavy on theory and short on practice, favouring those used to formal education and with higher degrees of literacy and numeracy. In one graduating class of officer candidates in late 1937 for which evaluations are available, most Scots were posted to units as non-commissioned officers, with only well-educated, middle-class volunteer John Dunlop noted to have any immediate potential for higher rank.⁷¹ Fewer and fewer Scots even had the chance at acquiring higher rank as time went by: the next graduating class contained just two Scots out of 54 candidates, both classed as 'not recommended for promotion.'⁷²

Religion and Marital Status

Although not directly linked, enumerating the Scottish volunteers' religious and marital backgrounds presents similar challenges, with neither consistently recorded at the time. This was particularly the case for religion. Richard Baxell found less than one hundred British volunteers for whom a denominational background could be established – 80 Catholics and 'a very small number' of Protestants – and it is difficult to improve on this picture directly.⁷³ One important difference is the relative absence of Jewish volunteers among the Scots, with Alec Marcovitch and Charles Hyman the only confirmed Jews to volunteer from Scotland.⁷⁴ This is in stark contrast to estimates for Britain as a whole, which range from a minimum of 60-80 to as many as twenty percent of

⁷⁰ 'Liste de camarades anglais parlant plusieurs langues', 16 January 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/89/12-3.

⁷¹ 'The Anglo-American Section of the Officer's Training School', 16 November 1937, RGASPI, 545/2/263/144.

⁷² 'Recommendations for promotion of graduates of the Officer's Training School', 16 January 1938, RGASPI, 545/2/264/20.

⁷³ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 18.

⁷⁴ This claim was made by Marcovitch, whose ties to both the Communist Party and the Gorbals Jewish community put him in a position to know. There are several other volunteers, such as David Grossart or Martin Messer, whose names may have had Jewish origins but whose background remains unclear. Alec Marcovitch, TLS, MS, Tape 182.

all volunteers.⁷⁵ This in turn likely reflects differing contexts of anti-fascist mobilisation, with few British Union of Fascists (BUF) campaigns against Scottish Jewish communities, unlike in Manchester and London's East End.⁷⁶ This meant that while Scottish Jews were naturally still likely to oppose fascism, community connections with the Communist Party were less well developed, and volunteering for Spain a less obvious extension of earlier anti-fascist campaigns.⁷⁷

By reputation, Irish Catholics were prominent in the Scottish Communist Party, particularly in Glasgow. One observer, David Murray, referred to Scottish 'CPers' as 'a pack of Irish not very ex-Papists.'⁷⁸ Less pejoratively, Chris Smith recalled that 75 percent of the Scottish Communist Party were Catholic, although this likely reflected his immediate circles in and around Glasgow rather than the Party throughout Scotland.⁷⁹ Such remarks, along with the relative frequency of common Irish names such as 'Kelly' or 'Kennedy', indicate that many volunteers likely had a Catholic background. Several such volunteers were listed as being born in Ireland in various sources, or can be traced in the census as having at least one Irish parent.⁸⁰ However, even the census is little help in establishing broader patterns, in part due to the difficulty of tracing most volunteers, but also as the 1911 census is the most recent currently available. Not only does this

⁷⁵ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 18, 159n. A lower estimate is found in Watkins, *Britain Divided*, 168. Bill Alexander gave the figure as 180-200, based on 'Jewish sounding names', Bill Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty: Spain, 1936-1939* (London, 1982), 33.

⁷⁶ On 'Blackshirts' in Glasgow, James Maley, IWMSA, Tape 11947/1. For comparisons, Elaine Smith, 'But What Did They Do? Contemporary Jewish Responses to Cable Street' and Neil Barrett, 'The Threat of the British Union of Fascists in Manchester' in Kushner and Valman (eds.), *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society* (London, 2000), 48-54, 56-70.

⁷⁷ Little research touches on Jewish involvement in the CPGB in Scotland. Jason Heppell notes significant Party activity in the 'Jewish areas' of Glasgow, but does not explore concrete connections, which is problematic as these areas, such as the Gorbals, were never exclusively Jewish enclaves. Jason Heppell, 'A Rebel, not a Rabbi: Jewish Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain', *Twentieth Century British History* 15:1 (2004), 34.

⁷⁸ Murray to Dott, 4 August 1937, NLS, David Murray Papers, Box 2, File 6.

⁷⁹ Chris Smith, IWMSA, Tape 12290/2.

⁸⁰ For example, William McDade, born in 'Ireland' but living and politically active in Dundee prior to Spain. Mike Arnott, *Dundee and the Spanish Civil War* (Dundee, 2008), 13. Several others can have their Irish heritage traced in the 1911 census, e.g. Robert Ball in 1911 Census of Scotland, Registration District Anderston, Enumeration District 22, Page 17, Household 109, Lines 2-11.

exclude many younger volunteers, it also means that those yet to migrate to Scotland do not appear. Other direct references to individuals' religion, past or present, are too rare to establish any sort of proportionality – those such as James Cassidy who were specifically referred to as Catholic were a tiny minority.⁸¹

Similarly, observations about marital status were too infrequent to establish a full picture. Despite recruiters' stated preference for single men without dependants, this was often ignored.⁸² Would-be volunteers could also deceive recruiters by initially claiming to have no dependants, only to later ask for financial support, as suggested in one missive written by Peter Kerrigan.

Here is another dependants claim, and, as usual, from Scotland. L. Inglis 75 Florence Street Glasgow C5. Wife and two children. The argument or excuse put up by these lads is that they understood they would be rejected if they had dependants.⁸³

Kerrigan's words indicate that this was a particularly Scottish problem, perhaps due to added emphasis placed on seeking single recruits in this district.

However, there is little specific evidence suggesting that Scots were more or less likely to be married than the norm. Overall, at its peak the International Brigade Wounded and Dependants' Committee were supporting the families of some 1,100 British volunteers, although not all of these were necessarily wives and children, with provision also available for elderly parents.⁸⁴

Surprisingly, perhaps the best sample of volunteers' religious beliefs and marital status comes not from British or International Brigade records, but from the Spanish Nationalists. Some prisoners of war were subjected to detailed physical and psychological examination by the Spanish psychiatrist Antonio Vallejo Nágera. Despite the suspicion with which Vallejo Nágera's pseudoscience must be treated, many of the observations made about basic attributes such as age, occupation and class do correspond relatively closely to

⁸¹ Cassidy's Catholicism was the theme of a brief eulogy in the *Daily Worker*, 25 March 1937, 3.

⁸² For recruitment preferences, see Burns in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 157.

⁸³ Kerrigan to Pollitt, 6 February 1937, MML, Box C, File 10.

⁸⁴ Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty*, 140–1.

other sources, suggesting that the material was not fabricated out of hand.⁸⁵ Other information, such as their religious background and marital status of the volunteers, goes well beyond what is available in other sources, and these results are summarised in Table 1.4.

While these figures cover all of Britain and cannot be broken down by region, their detail and internal consistency is a useful step towards an overview of the volunteers' personal lives. Two-thirds did not have children, and less than a quarter had ever been married. Despite the supposed prominence of Catholics within the Communist Party, it is clear that this can be overstated, although hidden regional variation likely obscures a greater Catholic presence among volunteers from cities such as Glasgow and Liverpool. It is possible that reconciling active Catholicism with socialism or anti-fascism was considerably more difficult than for Protestants. Although Protestants often professed to retain their religion, the author made it clear in the commentary that despite such claims, further investigation established that '*en su inmensa mayoría son indiferentes religiosos y mucho de ellos ateos*.'⁸⁶ However, such judgements need to be treated sceptically, especially as Vallejo Nágera's key thesis was that '*la irreligiosidad*' was a major cause of Marxist tendencies.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ 'Psiquisismo del Fanatismo Marxista: Internacionales ingleses', *SME* 27 (September 1939), 308–12. On the wider context of these experiments, see Michael Richards, 'Morality and Biology in the Spanish Civil War: Psychiatrists, Revolution and Women Prisoners in Málaga', *Contemporary European History* 10:3 (2001), 395–421.

⁸⁶ Trans: in their immense majority they are religiously indifferent and many of them atheists. 'Psiquisismo del Fanatismo Marxista: Internacionales ingleses', 310.

⁸⁷ 'Trans: irreligiosity. Psiquisismo del Fanatismo Marxista: Internacionales ingleses', 310–12. See also 'Psiquisismo del Fanatismo Marxista: Investigaciones biopsíquicas en prisioneros internacionales [North American]', *SME* 22 (January 1939), 108–12; 'Psiquisismo del Fanatismo Marxista: Investigaciones biopsíquicas en prisioneros internacionales [Portuguese]', *SME* 34 (1939), 522–4.

Religion	Total	Percent	Marital Status	Total	Percent
Catholic	12	29.3	Widowed with children	1	2.4
Retain their beliefs and practice	2	4.6	Married with children	6	14.6
Retain their beliefs and don't practice	5	12.1	Married without children	2	4.6
Converted to Protestantism	1	2.4	Single, cohabiting	1	2.4
Converted to Catholicism and practice	1	2.4	Single, sexual activity outwith prostitution.	24	58.2
Lost their beliefs	3	7.3	Single, abstinent	1	2.4
Protestant	17	41.4			
Retain their beliefs and practice	12	29.2			
Retain their beliefs and don't practice	4	9.7			
Converted to Catholicism	1	2.4			
Atheist	12	29.3			
No family religion	3	7.3			
Protestant family religion	9	21.9			
Total	41			41	

Table 1.4: Religious and marital backgrounds of British prisoners.⁸⁸

Geography

Thus far, while a demographic analysis has identified trends and offered a basis for comparison with other nationalities, it has done relatively little to narrow the scope of the enquiry. No precise commonalities have emerged across the categories examined. However, the geographical distribution of volunteers' origins offers considerably more scope for such clustering to emerge. It is well established that British International Brigade volunteers tended to come from urban industrial centres. Baxell offers a regional breakdown of where volunteers came from, showing notable concentrations in the industrial regions

⁸⁸ 'Psiquismo del Fanatismo Marxista: Internacionales ingleses', 310-11.

where the Communist Party had made the most significant inroads, namely Wales, North-West England, Scotland and the South-East, with particular urban concentrations in Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow and London.⁸⁹ However, there are two major limitations in Baxell's analysis. The first is that while a regional analysis is helpful, it remains a very broad measure of where volunteers came from. The approximately 370 volunteers from North-West England, for example, came from a relatively large population even once age, class and occupation are taken into account.⁹⁰ If clustering occurred on a more local level, it might reveal much more about who precisely the volunteers were. Second, although regions with higher numbers of volunteers tended to be the main Communist Party strongholds in Britain, measuring and understanding Party strength and its influence on recruitment is not straightforward.

Determining volunteers' precise point of origin is often problematic. Many addresses provided on enlistment were for next of kin. Furthermore, there is no single authoritative list of such addresses, and information here was compiled from many individual sources across multiple archives – sources that are sometimes conflicting. In order to maintain consistency while incorporating as broad a source base as possible, a hierarchy of evidence has been established that prioritises certain measures over others, based on the specific needs of this study. As noted above, a key criterion by which volunteers were judged to be Scottish was the extent to which they were exposed to Scottish political cultures prior to Spain, and this criterion continues to be important in judging a volunteers' point of origin. As such, wherever possible the point of origin has been determined as being the locale where an individual's political life took place – their membership of a particular political party or trade union branch, for example. If this information is unavailable, it is judged based on a home address provided in contemporary sources. If these are unavailable, locations mentioned in testimony, reports or letters, or listed in material compiled later are accepted. Finally, in the few cases for which no other information is

⁸⁹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 19.

⁹⁰ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 19.

available, their birthplace or next of kin is accepted as the best possible approximation.

It is immediately apparent that the Scottish volunteers came from very specific places. 438, or just over 84 percent, came from places that saw at least five individuals go to Spain. In other words, most who chose to go to Spain lived in close proximity to others who made the same decision. In fact, many among the other sixteen percent still lived in close proximity to other volunteers. In Fife and Lanarkshire, the two areas with the highest proportion outside these clusters, the sample is fractured by the prominence of volunteers from smaller villages – typically mining villages – in close proximity to each other or to neighbouring towns. Furthermore, even for the smallest clusters such as Prestonpans in East Lothian, there is evidence that volunteers knew each other.⁹¹ In very few cases was the choice made in complete isolation from other volunteers.

The exact places these clusters occurred are also significant. The distribution among Scotland's major urban centres reflects the nature of their economies, with heavily industrialised Glasgow and Dundee home to nearly half of the Scottish volunteers, with proportionally smaller numbers coming from Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Other Clydeside industrial towns are similarly prominent, albeit on a smaller scale. The Scottish coalfields are also well represented, with clusters among mining communities in Fife, Lanarkshire and to a lesser extent East and West Lothian. As noted above, however, Scottish miners did not participate on the same scale as those from South Wales and did not come from a single mining region. The patterns of clustering correspond well to the volunteers' occupational data, concentrated in locales with economies dominated by industry, transportation and manual labour.

⁹¹ Watters in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 34.

Location	Total
Major cities	
Aberdeen	23
Dundee	57
Edinburgh	48
Glasgow	199
Total Major cities	327
Dunbartonshire	
Clydebank	11
Vale Of Leven	15
Other	4
Total Dunbartonshire	30
Fife	
Cowdenbeath	5
Kirkcaldy	13
Methil/Buckhaven	7
Other	12
Total Fife	37
Lanarkshire	
Airdrie	10
Bellshill	8
Blantyre	5
Cambuslang	7
Wishaw	5
Other	13
Total Lanarkshire	56
Renfrewshire	
Greenock	17
Paisley	8
Other	5
Total Renfrewshire	30
Other	
Ayrshire	8
Lothians	9
Misc/unknown	23
Total Other	40
Total Scotland	520

Table 1.5: Scottish volunteers' point of origin.⁹²

Glasgow is the most notable single cluster, providing the point of origin for almost two-fifths of the Scottish contingent. However, Glasgow's status as

⁹² See Appendix A.

Scotland's largest city at the time means that this is to some extent expected, and does relatively little to narrow down exactly who the volunteers were. Yet the Glaswegian volunteers came from very specific places within the city.

Location (within Glasgow)	Total	Percent of known total
Anderston	5	2.9
Bridgeton	16	9.4
Central	9	5.3
Dennistoun	5	2.9
Gorbals	23	13.5
Govan	14	8.2
Maryhill	16	9.4
Possilpark	9	5.3
Shettleston	11	6.4
Springburn	19	11.1
Townhead	18	10.5
Other known districts	26	15.2
Total known	171	100
Unknown	28	-
Total	199	-

Table 1.6: Point of origin of Glaswegian volunteers.⁹³

Discounting the 28 volunteers for whom Glasgow is the most precise approximation available, the proportion who came from a neighbourhood with five volunteers – just under 85 percent – is almost identical to the same measure applied to the whole of Scotland. Over 60 percent came from the six densest suburban clusters alone. As was the case with the previous table, this likely underestimates the Glaswegian volunteers' close proximity to each another – Glaswegians' high mobility within the city meant that individuals could develop connections outwith their place of residence or work. The specific districts acting as hubs of volunteering are also significant. These areas are among the most deprived in Glasgow, often home to recent immigrants, most frequently from Ireland. The structural downturn in heavy industry and the reduced demand for manual and industrial labour had hit these areas the hardest, resulting in extremely high unemployment rates in the years prior to the Spanish Civil War.⁹⁴ The combination of low-skilled populations, structural

⁹³ See Appendix A.

⁹⁴ Chris Cook, *The Age of Alignment: Electoral Politics in Britain* (London, 1975), 82–7; J.J. Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow 1896–1936* (East Linton, 2000), 30–1.

unemployment and, in some cases, Irish Catholicism represented three elements that link the effectiveness of communist campaigning and recruitment in interwar Scotland.⁹⁵

The picture presented thus far by the various measures of demographic data available indicates that patterns of volunteering were shaped considerably by the industrial geography of Scotland and by associated socioeconomic trends such as migration. That immediate geographical proximity was such a universal commonality for Scottish volunteers suggests this physical closeness was also accompanied by direct personal ties between individuals. However, even with the relatively complete picture available of who the volunteers were in a demographic sense, solid connections among volunteers are still generally absent in the data examined so far. There are some exceptions – Robert Milton and George Gowans, for instance, were the same age and belonged to the same trade union branch in Ayrshire.⁹⁶ The two volunteers from Peterhead, George Eddie and James Buchan, were both seamen in their mid-late thirties.⁹⁷ At least nine Dundonians had some connection to the textile trade, through either stated occupation or union membership. Many mining areas showed connections in terms of occupation and union membership, notably in Bellshill, Bathgate, Prestonpans and many places throughout Fife. However, these specific intersections of occupation and geography remain very much the exception rather than the rule. If there were, as the clustering suggests, direct connections between individual volunteers from the same place, these connections were not typically fostered in the workplace or in the official labour movement.

Political Affiliation

Any analysis of the Scottish volunteers' political affiliation begins with the Communist Party. It was an open secret that the CPGB was the driving force

⁹⁵ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, 70-2.

⁹⁶ *Glasgow Herald*, 6 May 1938, 14.

⁹⁷ See 'EDDIE George' and 'BUCHAN James' in TNA KV 5/118,121.

behind recruitment for the International Brigades in Britain, and volunteers could not help but be aware that the Party continued to exert control and influence over the British contingent during their service.⁹⁸ Most estimates claim that Communist Party members made up over 60 percent of the International Brigades.⁹⁹ However, efforts were made to recruit from other parties, especially the Labour Party, for which Baxell counted some 110 members in Spain out of a sample of 1,489 volunteers.¹⁰⁰

Political Affiliation	Number in Spain (from 520)
CPGB	238
Young Communist League (YCL)	54
Labour Party	20
Independent Labour Party (ILP)	1
NUWM	105
Left Book Club (LBC)	1
Other	5
No affiliation found (including 29 trade union members)	177

*Table 1.7: Political Affiliations of Scottish volunteers prior to enlistment.*¹⁰¹

At first glance, the Scottish contingent conforms to Baxell's observations. Taking the CPGB and YCL together, some 56 percent of Scots were Party members – slightly under the estimate for Britain as a whole. This figure may be an underestimate. Baxell, for instance, claims that Party members tended to keep their affiliation to themselves, partly to avoid repercussions in the event of capture but also to preserve the appearance of a united front.¹⁰² However, while this may have been true in day-to-day interactions between volunteers, it was not true from an administrative perspective, and considerable effort was expended keeping track of and evaluating Party members in the British Battalion.¹⁰³ While there is no definitive list of all Party members, given the

⁹⁸ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 14.

⁹⁹ E.g. Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London, 1961), 455; Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 14–15.

¹⁰⁰ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 15.

¹⁰¹ These affiliations were not mutually exclusive. Some had simultaneous membership of different groups. See Appendix A.

¹⁰² Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 14–15.

¹⁰³ This is discussed in more depth in Chapter Four.

plethora of places in which membership was a category of administrative interest, not to mention external observation from interested agencies such as the Security Service, it is unlikely that many individuals were Party members and did not appear listed in at least one record. As such, it is doubtful that this approximation for Scottish Party members is a significant underestimate. However, this conclusion does not hold for other categories, as there was never such consistent interest in recording them. As such, the figure of 177 without any official political affiliations is likely to be somewhat lower in reality.

The smaller political groupings are also noteworthy. On initial appearances, the number of Labour Party members is roughly in proportion with Baxell's total. However, in Scotland this diversity proved largely illusory. Although twenty volunteers indicated some attachment to the Labour Party or local affiliate, at least eight of these were also members of the Communist Party or a front organisation such as the NUWM. The Party also had substantial direct influence within the Labour Party, with many potential CPGB recruits believing that 'even if you agree with the Communist Party and its basic aims that you can render better service to the Party by remaining in the Labour Party.'¹⁰⁴ By 1939 there were some 1,500 'concealed' CPGB members in organisations such as the Labour Party that maintained a policy of refusing membership to Communists.¹⁰⁵ These practices means that the presence of Labour Party members indicates less ideological diversity among the volunteers than might be assumed.

The lack of ILP members – despite Glasgow representing their major stronghold at the time – also speaks to the extent that ideological positions were relatively homogenous among the Scottish volunteers.¹⁰⁶ The absence of LBC members is also telling. While the LBC had substantial membership in Scotland – and was

¹⁰⁴ CC Meeting, 24 June 1939, RGASPI, 495/14/265/142

¹⁰⁵ CC Meeting, 24 June 1939, RGASPI.

¹⁰⁶ Gray claimed that a fifth of volunteers were Labour or ILP members, and that up to 100 Scottish ILP members fought in Spain. The basis for the first claim is unknown but is unsupported by the findings here. The second appears to be based on reports of 100 ILP fighters being recruited to join the small contingent fighting with the POUM. There is no evidence that this group departed Britain. Gray, *Homage*, 35, 142; *Glasgow Herald*, 12 January 1937, 9.

noted to be growing quickly in Glasgow by 1937 – it primarily catered for a middle-class readership rather than the working-class communities from which volunteers came.¹⁰⁷ However, as LBC membership was never a matter of administrative interest in Spain this figure may be underreported. Finally, very much in the ‘Other’ category, Robert Grierson of Dumfries had actually belonged to the BUF, an affiliation that naturally excited considerable suspicion in Spain. However, even the most zealous Stalinists were forced to conclude that he was ‘mostly harmless’, before his death in March 1938 rendered him no political threat whatsoever.¹⁰⁸

When individuals joined the Communist Party is also important. While such detailed biographical information is not available for the majority of Party members, it is available for those who joined the Spanish Communist Party (PCE). Applicants filled out a ‘*Biografía de Militantes*’, detailing their personal, social and political histories. Some 47 Scottish Party Members, and three active non-members, completed these declarations. Of these, 60 percent had joined the Party prior to 1935 and the adoption of the Popular Front line, even though at most 40 percent of the Party’s members in 1938 had joined prior to this date.¹⁰⁹ This disproportionate favouring of longstanding members is unsurprising, as such individuals were more experienced and had had more opportunity to earn the Party’s trust and favour. As noted in other studies of national Communist Parties, the turbulent ‘Class against Class’ period resulted in the development of a core membership characterised by their discipline and relatively unconditional acceptance of the Party line.¹¹⁰ Although the Communist Party had begun a successful period of expansion after 1935, these figures indicate a qualitative difference in the Party’s new recruits. They were perhaps less

¹⁰⁷ ‘Left Book Club’, CPGB Scottish District Congress, 4–5 September 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/263/9.

¹⁰⁸ ‘GRIERSON, Robert’ in RGASPI, 545/6/143/1–4.

¹⁰⁹ ‘From the 17th to the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union’, 3 November 1939, RGASPI, 495/14/265/207.

¹¹⁰ In the Spanish context, see Tim Rees, ‘Living Up to Lenin: Leadership Culture and the Spanish Communist Party, 1920-1939’, *History* 97:326 (2012), 230-55. On the period in Britain, see Matthew Worley, *Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars* (London, 2002).

doctrinaire and uncritically accepting of the Party, shaped as much by their anti-fascism as by their embrace of Bolshevism and, as a result, may have been less trusted by the Communist Party leadership.

These biographies also give a qualitative insight into the Scottish contingent more broadly. Membership of the PCE is a useful proxy for understanding the spectrum of political loyalties in Spain. Admittance to the Spanish Party was an honour reserved for those who had a good record in Spain and had demonstrated their political dedication, making this group a political 'elite' among the British.¹¹¹ It was a voluntary act of commitment to the Party – those who had started to harbour doubts or had lost interest in politics in Spain were unlikely to either apply or be accepted – making this group the best approximation of the 'Party faithful' among the Scots. Given that almost all applications dated from April 1938 or later, this points to this group making up a quarter of the approximately 220 Scots who served in the British Battalion in this period. Given that over a similar period approximately one-sixth of British volunteers were classified as 'bad' by Party leaders, this indicates that between a core of committed communists and somewhat smaller group of disaffected, dissenting or criminal individuals, a majority were not doctrinaire communists but did retain some attachment to the Party or its principles throughout their service.

To understand this middle ground, which covered a spectrum of political attachment or attraction to communism, it is necessary to appreciate membership numbers as just one facet of the CPGB's presence in Scotland. The period from 1935 onwards was generally characterised by expansion, thanks to the aforementioned Popular Front policy and the impetus sparked by the rise of fascism in Europe, including the Spanish Civil War itself.¹¹² During the main period of recruitment for the International Brigades from December 1936 to

¹¹¹ Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 351.

¹¹² Andrew Thorpe, 'The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945', *The Historical Journal* 43:3 (2000), 793–5.

May 1938, Party membership in Scotland grew from 1,800 to nearly 3,000.¹¹³ However, this expansion masked a great deal of fluidity in individual and regional experiences before and during the conflict.¹¹⁴ Many drifted in and out of the party during the 1930s, often finding themselves unable to afford membership dues during periods of unemployment.¹¹⁵ In 1939, fourteen percent of Scotland's members were known to be in arrears with their dues, which was noted to actually represent 'a definite improvement.'¹¹⁶ Failure to pay membership fees was just one way in which individuals might leave and return to the Party. Disagreement about ideological stances, personality clashes or migration could all act to interrupt membership. Many, such as Glaswegian William Hunter, had previously been expelled from the Party, or, like George McDermott, had let their membership lapse. At least 25 Scots – almost ten percent of the CPGB total – fell into these categories. Given the lack of detailed knowledge regarding many volunteers' personal histories, the actual number is likely higher. For many individuals, their relationship to the CPGB was liminal – integrated into its orbit, but not with full or permanent membership of the Party itself.¹¹⁷

Relying on membership numbers to explain recruitment patterns also disguises the extent to which the Communist Party influence actually mattered in a local sense. Membership strength alone was rarely a completely accurate predictor of how many volunteers a district could recruit. At the Party Conference in May 1937, it was noted that London had more than twice as many members as

¹¹³ For December 1936 figures, see 'Report on basic measures for the growth of the CPGB', 3 December 1936, RGASPI, 495/14/215/21. For 1939, see 'Party membership', January 1940, RGASPI, 495/14/265/24. Total membership was 11,500 and 16,000 in December 1936 and May 1938 respectively.

¹¹⁴ Variation and retention difficulties are discussed in Thorpe, 'Membership of the Communist Party', 795–9.

¹¹⁵ E.g. McCusker in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 41.

¹¹⁶ 'Party membership', January 1940. While there could be a certain degree of pragmatic flexibility, the Party did occasionally crack down on those who failed to pay their dues. E.g. Vale of Leven circular, January [1936?], RGASPI, 495/14/194/48; CC Meeting 3–4 December 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/259/86.

¹¹⁷ On the variable nature of membership and its meanings, see Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn, *Communists and British Society, 1920-1991* (London, 2007), 13–18.

Scotland.¹¹⁸ Estimates of the number of Londoners in Spain, however, range from 520 to just 350, with a lower estimate probable as many volunteers used London 'care of' addresses when they signed up for Spain.¹¹⁹ Even the upper range of this estimate, however, shows that as many Londoners went to Spain as Scots, despite London having a considerably larger CPGB membership base. While there is clearly some connection between Party membership and recruitment, such mismatches indicate that this connection is more complex than simple arithmetic. Influence might also be measured through the numbers who attended Communist rallies, showed up to Party social activities or who gave money to their causes.

There are numerous examples within Scotland where membership figures do not tell the full story. In Glasgow, membership was noted to be 'far from commensurate with Party's influence and prestige.'¹²⁰ The CPGB's only MP at the time was elected in West Fife, and thousands of Fife miners had been members of the Communist-controlled United Mineworkers of Scotland.¹²¹ Yet in September 1936, the Fife District of the Communist Party had just 232 members. This was partly due to the blacklisting of CPGB members by the official mining union and pit owners, meaning that most Fife communists faced unemployment.¹²² Similarly, the Vale of Leven had only 47 Party members in July 1937, yet was singled out by Stuart Macintyre as being an archetypical 'Little Moscow', where the CPGB enjoyed unusual local social and political clout.¹²³ Clearly, the Party could count on influence beyond the relatively limited circles implied by its membership figures in these locales. Opposite examples can also be given: Kilmarnock had one of the largest concentrations of Party members in Western Scotland, with 72 members in July 1937, higher than

¹¹⁸ XIV Party Congress, 28 June 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/227/4.

¹¹⁹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 19, 160n.

¹²⁰ 'Party Growth in Glasgow', Scottish District Congress, 4–5 September 1937, RGASPI.

¹²¹ Worley, *Class Against Class*, 163–5.

¹²² Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927–1941* (London, 1985), 183; Alan Campbell, *The Scottish Miners, 1874–1939, Volume Two* (Aldershot, 2000), 387–8; 'Fife District', September [1936?], RGASPI, 494/14/190/56.

¹²³ Stuart Macintyre, *Little Moscovs* (London, 1980), 79–107.

comparable nearby towns such as Greenock (34), Paisley (38) or Clydebank (62).¹²⁴ Yet no International Brigade volunteers were recruited from Kilmarnock, indicating limitations when it came to mobilising this membership base. Such examples indicate the need to appreciate communist strength in terms of influence rather than membership – and just as importantly, how effectively this influence could be translated into mobilisation, especially as the call to arms reached beyond the inner core of the Party faithful.

The qualitative variation in different types of Communist Party influence is reflected in the absence of significant clustering along union membership lines noted above. This is unlikely to be a matter of poor record keeping, as the Party had every motive to collect this information, as it was perceived as useful leverage when negotiating with the official labour movement.¹²⁵ More likely, this reflected structural factors pertaining to how the Communist Party operated within the official labour movement. Facing pressure from the national leadership, many unions operated some form of anti-communist discrimination. Although these measures' actual effectiveness tended to vary, and did not altogether prevent communist penetration and influence, they did preclude the sort of community building that could take place around the Party branch system.¹²⁶ In Glasgow, it was noted that the Party had failed to 'draw active Trade Unionists into Branch meetings and Branch life' and despite many individuals' success in achieving positions of influence in local trade unions, there were 'active and influential Trade Union comrades' who over 'a period of years, have failed to recruit a single new member.'¹²⁷ As such, while the Communist Party clearly had significant influence in the Glasgow Trades Council – they claimed to 'have 60 delegates and a majority on the E[xecutive] C[ommittee]' – it was not a sphere for active Party building.¹²⁸ While the labour

¹²⁴ 'Scottish Report', Scottish District Congress, 4–5 September 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/263/6.

¹²⁵ E.g. Brailsford to Citrine, 22 February 1937, *Trabajadores Collection*, University of Warwick, 292/946/34/192i-193xii.

¹²⁶ Buchanan, *Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement*, 12, 34–5.

¹²⁷ 'Party Growth in Glasgow', Scottish District Congress 4–5 September 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/263/19.

¹²⁸ 'Report on Scottish District', 3 June 1938, RGASPI, 495/14/260/59.

movement remained a key theatre of activity for the Party, success was achieved through the placement and promotion of key individuals, not creating and sustaining communities that could provide a solid basis for recruitment for either the International Brigades or the Party itself.

Even without considering broader definitions of 'influence', the number of Scottish Communist Party members who volunteered for Spain represents a considerable proportion of the Party's strength. Based on membership figures from September 1937 adjusted only for gender, nearly fifteen percent of Scottish communists fought in Spain, including nearly twenty percent of the Dundee membership, eighteen percent in Glasgow and over a quarter in Greenock.¹²⁹ These are likely slight overestimates, as the total includes some volunteers who joined the Communist Party after September 1937. Yet even using the membership figures from mid-1938 – some 3,070 including approximately 500 women – there is no doubt that well over ten percent of all male Scottish communists fought in Spain, even before accounting for age or fitness.¹³⁰ This indicates that the CPGB and its local presence are central to explaining recruitment for the International Brigades, in contrast to prior accounts' characterisation of volunteering as a product of a broad ideological spectrum, or considering communist volunteers to make up just a 'small proportion of the total membership of the CPGB.'¹³¹ While a minority, it was nonetheless a remarkable mobilisation of such a small organisation.

Conclusions

The Scottish volunteers' demographic profile shows that volunteers shared important commonalities in terms of class, locality and political beliefs, while remaining disparate in terms of occupation, age and status within the official labour movement. The commonalities strongly indicate that the volunteers

¹²⁹ 'Scottish Report', Scottish District Congress 4–5 September 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/263/6.

¹³⁰ 'Report on Scottish District', 3 June 1938, RGASPI, 495/14/260/56.

¹³¹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 24.

tended to have pre-existing relationships with other volunteers, defined along specific axes. If such personal connections between volunteers were not typically formed in the workplace, or within the official labour movement, then there are two other likely possibilities. The first is through involvement in political parties and activism. The second is that the connections formed socially – through family, friendships, being members of the same clubs or even drinking at the same pubs. However, in Scotland any such separation of social and political factors is misleading. Rather, the success of radical political parties in Scotland in the interwar period lay in their ability to foster community and social activity alongside political activism, particularly at the local branch level. This was thanks to a history of political organisation in Scotland which emphasised grassroots organisation, local branch autonomy and community development ahead of hierarchical leadership with power invested in the upper echelons of a party.¹³² In particular, the ILP had done a great deal to encourage the conflation of social and political activity in many places throughout the country, most notably in Glasgow.¹³³ It is within the resulting social-political sphere that potential personal connections between Scottish volunteers become generally apparent. Discussion of these connections, and their influence on the recruitment process, is taken up in the following chapter.

The political affiliations of volunteers point towards most such social-political connections being defined around the Communist Party. The comparatively massive proportion of Scottish communists that went to Spain indicates that it was near impossible that their decision was made in isolation from their community. Going to Spain was not a theoretical prospect, but a decision being made or considered by their friends, families and colleagues. As such, a key

¹³² This organisational evolution is well-established in literature dealing with Scottish radical cultures. A 'distinctively Scottish radical thread' is traced by W. Hamish Fraser, *Scottish Popular Politics: From Radicalism to Labour* (Edinburgh, 2000), x. Similarly, Knox traces Scottish distinctiveness back to Calvinism and the Enlightenment, pointing to their continued influence in interwar Scotland, Knox, *Industrial Nation*, 20-6, 232-48. A specific study of Glasgow dockers traces these features back to the 1850s, William Kenefick, *Rebellious and Contrary: The Glasgow Dockers, 1853-1932* (East Linton, 2000), 4-8, 243-7.

¹³³ R. J. Morris, 'The ILP, 1893-1932: introduction' in McKinlay and Morris (eds.), *The ILP on the Clyde, 1893-1932: from foundation to disintegration* (Manchester, 1991), 1-16.

factor in explaining the effectiveness of Scottish recruitment for the International Brigades was the Communist Party's strength, defined not simply by membership figures but their tactics, influence and ability to attract and develop those who were particularly predisposed towards volunteering. This points to the necessity of understanding communist 'influence' as having qualitative differences in different places. The Party could develop intellectual influence through initiatives such as the LBC, or organisational influence through infiltrating the labour movement and winning over key figures, but these were not spaces that greatly facilitated the mobilisation of volunteers. Rather, mobilisation – for Spain or other direct, sustained activism – required influence to be built around a community. The connections between volunteers indicate the ways and places in which the communists were successful in developing this sort of influence, with their success in Scotland being based on locality rather than industry or the labour movement.

The extent that communist influence transcended their membership base in Scotland allows for a different understanding of who the Scottish International Brigaders were. Instead of a rigid differentiation between 'communists' and 'non-communists', such an explanation posits that the vast majority of volunteers were part of a broader social-political web, the core of which was made up of Party members but the influence of which spread considerably further. The 177 volunteers for whom no political affiliation could be discerned should not, therefore, be regarded as neutral, or disassociated from the communist political sphere. The next chapter explores the basis for Communist Party influence in Scotland in greater depth, and the importance of integration into such networks for non-communists. It suffices to note here that successful recruitment for the International Brigades in Scotland was achieved not just through a relatively strong membership base, but also the influence the Party had been able to build by leveraging broader political and community identities. This in turn implies that the Scottish contribution to the International Brigades was not a product of the broader left as it has often been portrayed in Scotland or elsewhere – rather, it was almost exclusively a Communist Party

enterprise.¹³⁴ This should not be seen as reinforcing traditional narratives of the communist-led 'Good Fight' in Spain – rather, it indicates the CPGB's failure to establish the International Brigades as an embodiment of the hoped-for united front.

This lack of diversity has important implications. In terms of political beliefs, and potentially also socially, the concentration of Scottish volunteering within relatively sharply-defined, small political communities makes for an interesting comparison with non-British cases. The concentration of volunteers from New York, in the American case, or Vancouver in the Canadian, points to a similar pattern of recruitment among established communities defined along axes of politics, class and geography.¹³⁵ The French – by far the most numerous contingent, with approximately 10,000 volunteers – provide a further example.¹³⁶ At first glance, these figures do not resemble the Scottish experience of intensive recruitment among a defined support base – the French Communist Party had won almost 15% of the vote in 1936, and by 1937 counted some 300,000 members. However, as Remi Skoutelsky has shown, this was a recent phenomenon, with membership growing tenfold since 1933. Yet almost half of the French volunteers in Spain had been Communists prior to this expansion.¹³⁷ Seen in this light, the recruitment of thousands of volunteers among the core of 30,000 'old guard' French communists represents a mobilisation on a similar scale as Scotland.

This finding is of broader interest for studies of transnational foreign fighters. Such fighters are often seen as scattered individuals, with perceived potential recruits vastly outnumbering the number of individuals who actually decide to volunteer. This is the outcome of treating recruitment as a process that takes

¹³⁴ The view of the International Brigades as embodying an ideologically-diverse united front continues to inform political and historical understandings, e.g. Paul Corthorn, 'Cold War Politics and the Contested Legacy of the Spanish Civil War', *European History Quarterly* 44:4 (2014), 691–2. See also Gray, *Homage*, 35; Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 15.

¹³⁵ Justin Byrne, 'From Brooklyn to Belchite' in Carroll (ed.), *Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War* (New York, 2007), 72–82; Petrou, *Renegades*, 20.

¹³⁶ Remi Skoutelsky, *Novedad en el frente* (Madrid, 2006), 169–70.

¹³⁷ Skoutelsky, *Novedad*, 181–2.

place among a broader general population. As seen here, the Scottish International Brigade volunteers should not be seen as a tiny minority of the Scottish population, or even Scots who supported the Spanish Republic. Rather, they need to be appreciated as a substantial mobilisation of a very specific, small community. By more carefully appreciating who makes up the bulk of volunteers and searching for connections between them, it may be possible to re-evaluate the recruitment of foreign fighters in other conflicts as the large-scale mobilisation of smaller groupings rather than being necessarily diffuse or sporadic.

Chapter Two: Decisions

The decision to fight in the Spanish Civil War has long fascinated historians, and with good reason. The foreign volunteers' motives appear distinct from the usual pressures to take up arms – the International Brigades were not defending their homes and families, they did not stand to gain financially nor did they owe Republican Spain any personal loyalty. Eighty years later, it seems almost completely irrational, harkening back to a noble, almost chivalric ideal of risking one's life for the sake of purely-held beliefs. It is these beliefs, therefore, which have dominated scholarly discussion of their decisions to volunteer.¹ Even accounts that propose other, less flattering motivations, such as adventure, profit or unemployment, still acknowledge the importance of ideological belief.² Stronger accusations, such as volunteers being 'tricked' through promises of jobs in Spain, have rarely been given credence in scholarly discussion.³ This is understandable – the volunteers were defined by their collective anti-fascism more than anything else, and their belief in the need to combat fascism offers a seemingly straightforward explanation of why they chose to go to Spain.

Yet relying on ideological belief to explain the phenomenon does not do justice to the question. As much as anti-fascism was a unifying cause, the precise meanings of anti-fascism differed from volunteer to volunteer – in the words of Tom Buchanan, 'it is easier to define what the volunteers were fighting against

¹ Richard Baxell, *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2004), 25–46; James Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire* (Stanford, 1998), 42–57. For Scotland, see Daniel Gray, *Homage to Caledonia* (Edinburgh, 2008), 23–36.

² Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 1997), 127; Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London, 1990), 454–5; Elizabeth Roberts, *'Freedom, Faction, Fame and Blood': British Soldiers of Conscience in Greece, Spain and Finland* (Brighton, 2010), 202.

³ Richard Baxell vehemently denies this, claiming to be working against a conservative historical consensus. Yet it is telling that primary material from right-wing tabloids is cited rather than historians. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 27–30. In another case, Baxell's evidence comes from the online comments section of an article in the *Spectator*. Richard Baxell, 'Myths of the International Brigades', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 91:1–2 (2014), 23.

than what they were fighting for.’⁴ Emerging transnational studies of anti-fascism have emphasised the ‘multiple meanings of anti-fascism as a concept.’⁵ At the very least, this demonstrates a need to consider ideological motivation beyond the oppositional, and link it more closely with the specific decision to volunteer. Moreover, relying on ideology to explain volunteering does little to explain the International Brigades’ uniqueness: the world was home to far more than 35,000 anti-fascists, so why did a specific minority go to Spain? More broadly, strong ideological principles were hardly unique to the late 1930s, so why was Spain so particularly attractive for foreign fighters? The first section of this chapter examines the role of ideology in motivating enlistment, looking at what these beliefs entailed and how they were articulated. Rather than being motivated purely by opposition to fascism, it is argued that volunteers developed and expressed ideas about reshaping Spanish society, and this in turn helps explain why Spain’s particular attraction for those that volunteered.

Insofar as ideological explanations of motivation have been challenged, it has been through attempts to appreciate a broader spectrum of push and pull factors at play in individual decisions to enlist. This approach has been pioneered by historians such as Nir Arielli and Helen Graham, who seek to portray the decision as the function of complex personal motivations and contexts, of which ideology is but one facet.⁶ These contributions have been fruitful, not least by opening up discussion on neglected dimensions such as recruitment networks and emphasising the complexity of the decision.⁷ However, these approaches remain problematic, partly because they often focus

⁴ Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, 127–8.

⁵ Hugo García, ‘Transnational History: A New Paradigm for Anti-Fascist Studies?’ *Contemporary European History* 25:4 (2016), 571.

⁶ Nir Arielli, ‘Induced to Volunteer? The Predicament of Jewish Communists in Palestine and the Spanish Civil War’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 46:4 (2011), 844–70; Helen Graham, *The War and its Shadow: Spain’s Civil War in Europe’s Long Twentieth Century* (Brighton, 2012), 75–8. This approach has proven influential in newer literature, see Gerben Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2017), 19–20; Tom Buchanan, ‘Ideology, Idealism, and Adventure: Narratives of the British Volunteers in the International Brigades’, *Labour History Review* 81:2 (2016), 123–40.

⁷ Nir Arielli, ‘Getting There: Enlistment Considerations and the Recruitment Networks of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War’ in Arielli and Collins (ed.), *Transnational Soldiers: Foreign Military Enlistment in the Modern Era* (Basingstoke, 2012), 219–30.

on a transnational elite for whom we have enough information to understand specific push and pull factors. More fundamentally, it implicitly abandons any attempt to understand what made the International Brigades such a unique phenomenon – that is, not only how individuals made the decision, but why so many did. As with earlier approaches, there remains an assumption that ideology is the only way the volunteers were connected. This has gone unchallenged thanks to the International Brigade volunteers appearing scattered and disparate, a small number when considered as part of a general population. Yet as the previous chapter has shown, the volunteers can also be seen as a relatively cohesive grouping within a much smaller politically- and geographically-defined population. By considering the volunteering phenomenon as more than just an internalised, individual choice, understandings of what motivated enlistment for Spain come into line with existing explanations of voluntary recruitment. In particular, by examining the role of community expectations, peer pressure and social standing, it is possible to appreciate not just why volunteering was an attractive response to the Spanish Civil War, but also why Scotland proved such an effective recruiting ground.

The findings in Chapter One strongly suggest that the Scottish International Brigade volunteers could be mobilised on a large scale thanks to the Communist Party's particular strength in Scotland, and the Party played a central role in terms of both leadership and providing many rank-and-file recruits. In itself, however, the confluence of volunteers around locality and party does not suffice to explain why this necessarily led to successful recruitment, and why these methods worked so particularly well in Scotland. Little about the recruitment process is well documented. Most public calls were vague, skirting potential illegalities by avoiding specifics and merely expressing that it was desirable for British volunteers to go to Spain.⁸ Due to this legal ambiguity, there could be no 'official' recruitment campaign, and little was committed to paper regarding

⁸ E.g. Bob Morrison, 'How the British Communist Party and British Working Class are Helping the Spanish Workers', 31 December 1936, RGASPI, 495/14/213/79–80.

how the CPGB went about it. As sources discussed throughout this chapter make clear, this decentralised campaign relied chiefly on word of mouth and appeals made by senior communists in person.⁹ Although this means little can be said about the process, the shape of the volunteering cohort can be readily understood as the outcome of such a decentralised, semi-secret recruitment campaign. The connections between volunteers described in the previous chapter are exactly what one might expect from a campaign that relied chiefly on existing political and social networks to spread. Other predictable outcomes – such as conflicting understandings of the terms of service among volunteers or varying physical and political standards – also became apparent during the British Battalion's time in Spain.¹⁰

This observation is confirmed in the second section, which examines how this decision to fight in Spain was made. It is argued that the Communist Party's ability to mobilise communities around a common ideological understanding of the conflict underpinned their ability to recruit. Going to Spain became more than a way of fulfilling abstract beliefs – with others in their immediate circles contemplating or having already decided to fight, potential volunteers faced pressure to match their peers' commitment to the common cause, and thereby cement their social and political standing. This focus on the role of group dynamics also helps explain why Scotland saw relatively strong recruitment for the International Brigades. The final section ties this success to Scotland itself. The CPGB presence in Scotland developed along particular lines, partly owing to strategy but also due to the context and environment they worked in. Communists were influenced by much older Scottish political traditions, which

⁹ One exception was a circular written by Socialist League leader H.N. Brailsford. This was unusually indiscrete, despite the letter noting that 'nothing must get into the press; it should be done by letter and word of mouth.' As noted in the margin of a CPGB copy, being so explicit made it 'illegal'. Circular, 9 December 1936, RGASPI, 495/14/213/42.

¹⁰ It may be tempting to construct some model of Scottish exceptionalism based on such differences. However, doing so means relying on Scots' own judgements – like Alec Donaldson's claims that Scotland was sending a 'a good type of Comrade' and it 'takes a Scotsman to get things done.' Donaldson to Kerrigan, 3 April 1938, MML, Box 50, File Dn/1. Non-Scots took different views. Bill Paynter, for instance, complained of 'very bad types' from Scotland, where 'it was known to the leading people that many of those who came from that District were uncontrollable.' Paynter to Pollitt, 9 June 1937, MML, Box C, File 14/1.

encouraged and even necessitated that the Communist Party prioritised community-led approaches.¹¹ It was this ongoing influence of Scottish socialist and radical cultures that inadvertently placed the CPGB in such a strong position when it came to recruiting for Spain.

Ideology

International Brigade volunteers' ideological views have already received substantial historical attention, with most modern scholarship agreeing that the volunteers were motivated by anti-fascism. In a British context, Richard Baxell has convincingly argued that the vast majority of volunteers were anti-fascists, and describes the various ways that they had become anti-fascists.¹² Yet the term 'anti-fascist' remains problematic. Communist Party opposition to fascism cannot be seen as solely conservative – communism hardly embraced pluralistic parliamentary democracy as either the means or end of their struggle.¹³ Yet even within the Communist Party, shifts in doctrine – notably towards the 'Popular Front' – meant that different generations of Party members might have different ideas about what fighting under an anti-fascist banner actually meant.¹⁴ Moreover, this formulation allows little space for positive intent in going to Spain, with Baxell concluding that the variety of volunteers' beliefs

¹¹ This argument builds on a body of literature on Scottish radical and socialist cultures, notably Stuart Macintyre, *Little Moscows* (London, 1980); Alan McKinlay and R. Morris (eds.), *The ILP on the Clydeside, 1893–1932* (Manchester, 1991); W. Hamish Fraser, *Scottish Popular Politics: From Radicalism to Labour* (Edinburgh, 2000); William Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800–Present* (Edinburgh, 1999); William Kenefick, *Red Scotland! The Rise and Fall of the Radical Left, c. 1872 to 1932* (Edinburgh, 2007); Neil Rafeek, *Communist Women in Scotland: Red Clydeside from the Russian Revolution to the end of the Soviet Union* (London, 2008).

¹² Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 25–46. For further analysis, see Josie McLennan, "'I Wanted to be a Little Lenin': Ideology and the German International Brigade Volunteers", *Journal of Contemporary History* 41:2 (2006), 287–304.

¹³ Revolutionary political intent has been mooted in other contexts. Amirah Inglis, *Australians in the Spanish Civil War* (Sydney, 1987), 116–17; Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999), 60–1. However, even British revisionist accounts avoid such questions. E.g. Robert Stradling, 'English-speaking Units of the International Brigades: War, Politics and Discipline', *Journal of Contemporary History* 45:4 (2010), 744–66.

¹⁴ Baxell differentiates between 'doctrinaire' communists and those who saw communists as fascism's most effective opponents. Baxell, 'Myths', 14.

beyond opposing fascism makes further analysis impossible.¹⁵ However, by adopting a different methodological approach utilising contemporary music, there are indications that Spain was attractive not just as a place to oppose fascism but also where volunteers could potentially realise their own vision of a socialist and democratic society.

The use of music helps to address some major source limitations.¹⁶ Fearghal McGarry used revolutionary statements made prior to the Spanish Civil War to complicate communist assertions that they were merely defending democracy.¹⁷ While suggestive, such evidence does not necessarily prove that volunteers left with revolutionary intent, as it remains plausible that their understanding had genuinely changed along with the context. While oral histories avoid these problems, their use in this context has other issues. Most Scottish volunteer testimony follows the 'recovery' mould of oral history, in which the primary goal is to preserve voices that might otherwise escape the historical record rather than engage critically and actively with the narrative being told.¹⁸ Respondents were given free rein to tell their stories as they wished, and as such tended to emphasise narratives that portrayed their service in the most favourable light possible. As such, it is unsurprising that the motivations that resonated best in a post-war climate – such as the defence of democracy and the prevention of the Second World War – are most common.¹⁹ When volunteers were questioned more closely, such as Garry McCartney being asked whether he thought volunteers expected to stay in Spain after a Republican victory, responses soon veered into different territory.

I'm quite sure that a number of people possibly had that in mind, you know, because those people who did not have family ties for example, would no doubt have these ideas in mind in some respects and why not?

¹⁵ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 30; Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, 127–8.

¹⁶ For discussion, see McLennan, "I Wanted to be a Little Lenin", 288–91.

¹⁷ McGarry, *Irish Politics*, 61.

¹⁸ Angela Bartie and Arthur McIvor, 'Oral history in Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review* 92 (2013), 113–26.

¹⁹ E.g. McCusker, McCartney and Murray in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 45, 260, 324.

After all they were fighting for a cause and if successful, they would want to share in the joys of reconstructing what had been destroyed.²⁰

Even aside from questions of emphasis and focus, the meanings of volunteers' ideological touchstones have shifted over time. In particular, a contemporary audience brings its own assumptions about 'democracy' that do not necessarily translate to this era. This is taken up by Tom Buchanan, who questioned 'what kind of democracy anti-fascists were seeking to defend' and 'what type of democracy they were trying to create.'²¹ According to Buchanan, for Party leaders and theorists the Soviet Union represented 'true democracy', meaning that 'defence of democracy' entailed substantial and necessary changes to liberal parliamentary systems.²² A similar thread can be detected in oral testimony. Many linked their politicisation to their experiences of British capitalism during the interwar slump. For David Anderson, it was experiencing unemployment that convinced him 'that there was something wrong with the system', for George Watters, the reaction of the police and government to the miners' strike of 1921 did the same.²³ Hugh Sloan was more explicit in questioning whether France and Britain 'had been truly democratic governments.' For Sloan, the Soviet Union and by extension the Spanish Republic represented an ideal truer to his own vision of democracy, precisely because they opposed capitalism.²⁴ Similar perspectives are evident in contemporary sources. In one survey, Party members were asked to identify their formative political influences. By far the most common responses were explicit or implicit critiques of British capitalism: working conditions, strikes, unemployment and social problems.²⁵ Yet these surveys were rarely a space in

²⁰ Garry McCartney, TLS, MS, Tape 168.

²¹ Tom Buchanan, 'Anti-fascism and Democracy in the 1930s', *European History Quarterly* 32:1 (2002), 40. See also Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers*, 65. For broader discussion of the evolving relationship between anti-fascism and democracy in the period, see Michael Seidman, *Transatlantic Antifascisms: From the Spanish Civil War to the end of World War II* (Cambridge, 2017), esp. 9–51.

²² Buchanan, 'Antifascism and Democracy', 53.

²³ Watters and Anderson in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 33, 89.

²⁴ Sloan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 238–9.

²⁵ E.g. 'Biografía de Militantes' of William Moses, RGASPI, 545/6/204/98; Frank Webster, RGASPI, 545/6/213/7; James Cunningham, RGASPI, 545/6/121/39.

which volunteers explicitly tied their beliefs to their motivations in coming to Spain, and in oral testimony such discussion is secondary to more appealing narratives about preserving democracy and peace. Neither allows a complete appreciation of ideology's role in the decision to volunteer.

In light of these issues, volunteers' music and song offers useful insight into their collective ideological beliefs. Wartime music is still an emerging approach for understanding soldiers' views, perspectives and concerns, and although there has been longstanding interest in the literary and poetic compositions, their music has been neglected.²⁶ Yet particularly in an age before mass visual media, the collective performance of and participation in singing served an important role in establishing and re-affirming group identity, alongside many other purposes.²⁷ Songs are by their very nature performative, allowing the collective expression and celebration of identity, reinforcing communal appreciations and understandings in a natural and enjoyable manner.²⁸ Their own compositions were often dense with meaning, with volunteers carefully writing their own lyrics to existing tunes. Moreover, by choosing whether to participate and help make a song popular, or by subverting a song's intended meaning through parody or appropriation, singing offered a degree of individual and group agency in determining the volunteers' collective self-image.²⁹ As such, song can offer an untapped avenue of insight into how the volunteers perceived the purpose of their fight in Spain, and the deeper meanings of their collective anti-fascism.

²⁶ In Valentine Cunningham's classic anthologies of civil war writing, for instance, poetry and prose dominate, with songs almost absent. Valentine Cunningham, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse* (London, 1980) and *Spanish Front: Writers on the Civil War* (Oxford, 1986).

²⁷ On the First World War, see Grahame Seal, "'We're Here Because We're Here': Trench Culture of the Great War", *Folklore* 124:2 (2013), 178–97. For American Civil War, see Christian McWhirter, *Battle Hymns: The Power and Popularity of Music in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 2012). For a theoretical overview of music and political expression, see John Street, 'Rock, Pop and Politics' in Frith, Straw and Street (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock* (Cambridge, 2000), 240–9.

²⁸ McLennan, "I Wanted to be a Little Lenin", 301–2.

²⁹ E.g. Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 146.

Moreover, songs and singing were essential to the experience of serving in the International Brigades.³⁰ Many written records dealing with their music have survived, including several songbooks published by the International Brigades during the conflict.³¹ The act of publication itself indicates the degree of significance attached to these songs. The importance of songbooks could transcend the Brigades themselves: one such songbook was the subject of an official request from the German Condor Legion, who asked that Nationalist spies secure them a copy in Madrid.³² Interestingly, they were unable to comply, with their contact claiming that copies were not available for sale, having been printed only for internal distribution in the International Brigades.³³ If true, this is further indication of the songbooks' importance specifically for the volunteers themselves, an act of inward self-definition rather than externally-directed propaganda. Even unpublished songs were treated with some respect: many were written down and found their way into trench newspapers, others were specifically collected by the International Brigade administrators and preserved in their archive.³⁴

The obsession with songs was not merely an administrative peculiarity. Omnipresent singing litters volunteers' recollections of Spain – 'any time you went on the march you didn't go without singing.'³⁵ This was practical as much as enjoyable. Singing helped overcome language and national differences, an omnipresent concern in the International Brigades.³⁶ For many volunteers, their first efforts at communication came on their arrival to Spain at the old fortress of Figueras, where each group used songs to proclaim their national and

³⁰ On uses and meanings of such songs, see Joaquina Labajo, 'La práctica de una memoria sostenible: El repertorio de las canciones internacionales de la Guerra Civil Española', *Arbor* 187:751 (2011), 847–56.

³¹ A collection is found in RGASPI, 545/2/409–13.

³² Oficina de la Legion Condor to SIM Jefatura, 20 September 1937, AGMA, C.2914,11, d.1.

³³ SIFNE to SIM Jefatura, 25 October 1937, AGMA, C.2914,11, d.5.

³⁴ E.g. 'Notes, poems, song lyrics, slogans and drawings by 15th Brigade volunteers', RGASPI, 545/3/473.

³⁵ Anderson in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 97.

³⁶ Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 95–8.

political identities.³⁷ This pattern repeated whenever different linguistic groups came together, such as Burns Night in January 1937, featuring 'Scottish, Irish and French songs' alongside 'two Dutchmen yodelling and playing concertinas.'³⁸ One song in particular was used to overcome seemingly impossible interpersonal barriers: *The Internationale*. It used the same tune the world over, allowing every volunteer to sing together. When John Dunlop crossed the frontier, he remembered each nationality singing their own songs until,

At last, somebody started up singing *The Internationale*, which of course we all knew, and we joined in. I find it extremely difficult to explain the feelings that swept through me when this singing of *The Internationale* started up. Here we were, all young men from really all the nations in Europe, and some from outside Europe as well, joining in this one song in their own language.³⁹

Thanks to its particular significance, *The Internationale* became the defining song of the International Brigades. Their official songbook gave it pride of place, publishing the lyrics in eleven different languages.⁴⁰ Yet the song itself was already known as the anthem of the Soviet Union and the international communist movement. Dunlop recalled the reaction of some Spanish anarchists in their ranks to its ubiquity.

They said, 'Why do we have to sing *The Internationale*? After all *The Internationale* is not a Spanish song. It is not the Anarchist song. It is the international Communist song...' The short simple answer to that was, 'Well, we're in the International Brigade and it happens to be one of the songs of the International Brigade... Apart from that we consider that it's the song of the international working class all over the world.' But I don't think they were very well convinced about that.⁴¹

In this light, the International Brigades' adoption of *The Internationale* was one of the many practical and cultural expressions tying the volunteers to both

³⁷ Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices from War*, 114. The British used *It's a Long Way to Tipperary* to similar effect. Fausto Villar Esteban, *Un valencianito en la Brigada Lincoln* (Unpublished manuscript, 1988), Labadie Collection, University of Michigan, 49–50.

³⁸ Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices from War*, 119–20

³⁹ Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 125.

⁴⁰ 'Canciones de guerra', 1937, RGASPI, 545/2/409/58-9.

⁴¹ Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 148.

communism and the Soviet Union.⁴² It was a useful shibboleth for the anti-fascist fighters, allowing each national group to understand themselves as fighting the same struggle, using a common signifier of political intent that transcended language. Yet while *The Internationale* presents a positive vision of the dissolution of differences and uniting to achieve common goals, it is still about revolutionary societal change. The British version calls for, amongst other things, doing 'away with all superstitions' and to 'change forthwith the old conditions.'⁴³ If *The Internationale* represented what the International Brigades were fighting for, it is clear that International Brigade volunteers did not expect post-war Spain to resemble British parliamentary democracy

The Internationale was not alone in promoting a particular vision of democratic Spain. Other published songs included *Comrades, March Shoulder to Shoulder* (Militant, strong and defiant / Workers will conquer the world / And the red banner in triumph / Will be forever unfurled), *Red-Front* (In the face of our class enemy / We ask no quarter, they shall not turn us back / We're standing ready for the final attack / On our enemy the bourgeoisie), and many others with similar themes.⁴⁴ However, aside from *The Internationale* it is unclear whether these songs, many of which predated the Spanish struggle, found resonance among rank-and-file volunteers. Better evidence comes from the songs that the volunteers wrote for themselves. The archives of trench newspapers are filled with poetry and songs written by volunteers attempting to express the emotions engendered by their service in Spain. Not all were overtly political. The most famous, *There's a Valley in Spain Called Jarama*, written by Glaswegian volunteer Alex McDade in mid-1937, draws instead on pride in loss and adversity.⁴⁵ Perhaps in part because it avoids overt political statements, it was

⁴² The popularity of Soviet culture in Spain is discussed in Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 120-5.

⁴³ 'Canciones de guerra', 1937, RGASPI 545/2/409/59.

⁴⁴ 'Comrades, March Shoulder to Shoulder' and 'Red Front' in 'Canciones de guerra', RGASPI 545/2/409/10,18-19.

⁴⁵ This song was originally satirical, but the eventual 'official' version replaced most such elements (e.g. 'For 'tis there that we wasted our manhood/And most of our old age as well' became 'It is there that we gave of our manhood/And most of our brave comrades fell'). Cunningham, *Spanish Civil War Verse*, 75-7.

widely adopted by the English-speaking volunteers, and has had a long life as a folk song commemorating the British and North American volunteers.⁴⁶

However, many other songs composed by the volunteers did draw on political themes. *No Pasaran* linked their struggle to the Russian Revolution (Twenty long years into history have passed / Since red revolt was victorious last) and projected the Soviet Union as the model for Spain and the world (Great beacon lights that in Russia were bright).⁴⁷ Another, *Ours Alone*, makes it clear that post-war Spain was being envisaged in very specific ways:

Let victory, when it comes, be ours alone
And jealously this triumph we shall hold
Lest others try to snatch it from our grasp

This war-torn Spain is ours to gain and keep
That on that day when shall reign supreme
We bend our backs to build our land anew
And those who toil shall own the things they make.⁴⁸

Similar themes are evoked by another work simply titled *International Brigade*, which depicted the volunteers, including 'Scots from Glasgow slums', uniting to 'hammer the world into shape'.⁴⁹ These are typical of a genre of volunteer compositions that went well beyond the official line that this war was in defence of the status quo. It was natural, perhaps inevitable, that the volunteers envisaged the society they fought for, and that this society best resembled an idealised Soviet model.

This is not to say that volunteers' claims to be defending democracy were cynical. Rather, the belief that the Soviet Union represented a genuinely democratic model needs to be taken seriously. The communist critique of

⁴⁶ Artists such as Billy Bragg and Woody Guthrie have performed famous versions. 'Billy Bragg and Maxine Peake in CD Tribute', *IBMT Newsletter* 32 (2012), 1. It is still commonly performed at commemorations, e.g. 'Music, Words and Wreaths in Jubilee Gardens to remember the volunteers', *IBMT Newsletter* 30 (2011), 4.

⁴⁷ 'No Pasaran', RGASPI, 545/3/473/26.

⁴⁸ This composition was 'rejected', presumably for publication in the Brigade newspaper, likely because it explicitly contradicted the official line. 'Ours Alone', RGASPI, 545/3/473/41.

⁴⁹ 'International Brigade', RGASPI, 545/3/473/54.

capitalism was rarely so powerful as during the interwar slump, while the Soviet Union retained mystique and moral standing as the world's first socialist nation. That the volunteers believed in this ideal and fought for it should not be taken as evidence that they were 'dupes of Moscow' or fighting to establish a similar dictatorship to those later seen in Eastern Europe.⁵⁰ That the Soviet Union failed to live up to its ideals does not invalidate the desire of individuals to fight for them, just as the failures of British democracy in the 1930s and before does not invalidate the choice to fight in 1939. Yet equally, it is important to contextualise the assertions of volunteers like Gary McCartney who claimed that they went to Spain to fight only for 'the freedom of a people to put a cross on a ballot paper', not to 'usher in socialism or communism.'⁵¹ Their vision of the democracy they fought for was often considerably more complex than this.

Instead, the ideological attraction of fighting in Spain should be understood in terms of both oppositional and positive factors. In resisting a 'fascist' takeover, Spain's struggle took on a mythic allure for activists more used to defeats and setbacks. Importantly, the nature of anti-fascism itself facilitated understanding Spain as a flashpoint in a worldwide conflict. Communism and anti-fascism were inherently internationalist, encouraging adherents to view their struggles as interconnected with those taking place elsewhere. For Scottish volunteers, it was easy to understand Spain within their own frame of reference: just as confronting the BUF reflected a wider international struggle, so too was Spain already part of their own struggles before they left. For volunteers such as John Lochore, this way of thinking was second nature.

I made a speech at a mass unemployed meeting... I got quite a severe telling off afterwards... [as] it was purely a demonstration against the [Unemployment Assistance Board] and here I was talking about

⁵⁰ In the British context Robert Stradling is most cynical about the Comintern's role, although selective quoting is required for his argument to resemble 'Stalin-controlled dupes betrayed by the Communists', as characterised by Baxell. Stradling, 'English-speaking Units', 752–3; Baxell, 'Myths', 14. Elsewhere, particularly in America, critical work comes closer to this characterisation, e.g. Ronald Radosh, Mary Habeck and Grigory Sevostianov, *Spain Betrayed* (New Haven, 2001), 103–4, 231–5.

⁵¹ McCartney in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 260.

recruiting for the International column in Spain. The two issues, for me, were connected.⁵²

In the few parts of Scotland that saw active fascist movements, this connection was even more apparent.⁵³ According to anti-BUF campaigner John Londragan, the fight, 'whether it be here in Aberdeen against the British Union of Fascists' or 'against Hitler and Mussolini in Spain, was exactly the same fight to me, no difference at all.'⁵⁴ For volunteers like Lochore and Londragan, there was no need to separate their personal struggles at home, and their eventual fight in Spain. This seamless integration mattered – as discussed in the previous chapter in relation to anti-unemployment activism, the more that the decision to go to Spain appeared as a natural extension of individuals' activism, the prospect was less likely to seem impractical or unappealing.

Yet Spain was also alluring as a place where an individual might make a positive difference. In Spain, unlike Britain and Scotland, revolutionary change appeared not just possible, but already underway. The enemy was out in the open, not hiding behind institutions, law and tradition. For those whose anti-fascism was based on socialist beliefs, as for most volunteers, the chance to realise these aspirations beyond anything possible at home was a key part of Spain's attraction. This was especially true for those whose work in Britain was stagnating. Some CPGB branches seen by the Party as 'weak' saw especially high rates of volunteering. Greenock and Rutherglen, both declining branches, saw a third and half of male members volunteer respectively.⁵⁵ Such patterns reflect Fearghal McGarry's observation that Irish communists' poor progress at home encouraged them to go to Spain, where their efforts might count for something.⁵⁶

⁵² Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 320.

⁵³ Stephen Cullen, 'The Fasces and the Saltire: The Failure of the British Union of Fascists in Scotland, 1932–1940', *Scottish Historical Review* 87:2 (2008), 306–31.

⁵⁴ Londragan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 171.

⁵⁵ 'Scottish Report', July 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/263/6; 'Lanarkshire', November 1936, RGASPI, 495/14/239/6.

⁵⁶ McGarry, *Irish Politics*, 63–4.

It is in this context that the aspirational songs of the International Brigade need to be understood. It is the expression of the hopeful, positive vision of Spain that helped draw the volunteers to fight. This should not be seen as the culmination of a Soviet plot to export communism – rather, Party leaders worried that articulating such desires could provoke division and controversy. Lochore, despite being chastised for subverting the leadership’s pragmatic approach at home, evidently learned this lesson eventually.

There was still quite a lot of confusion in our ranks as to the role of the Brigade and the nature of the struggle taking place. Confusion arose from the failure to recognise the difference between a Socialist Red Army establishing workers’ power and a Republican Army fighting against fascism.⁵⁷

While, judging from later testimony, many volunteers accepted this line by the time they left Spain, their initial ‘confusion’ is still important. Spain was attractive not just as a place to confront fascism, but as a space in which a new society seemed possible – a sentiment that many International Brigade volunteers continued to express through their music during their time in Spain. While the International Brigades were likely not intended as a Stalinist plot to overthrow the Republic and turn Spain into a Soviet satellite, and the aims of Soviet intervention were considerably more modest, this does not necessarily imply that rank-and-file volunteers shared such a clinical view of their role.⁵⁸ Rather, as their self-expression through song often indicated, their emotional investment in being part of positive change should be appreciated as an integral part of their motivation to enlist.

⁵⁷ Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices from War*, 118–19.

⁵⁸ On Soviet aims, see Baxell’s discussion of Daniel Kowalsky’s work, although Kowalsky is more equivocal than depicted by Baxell: his thesis is less that Stalin had no ulterior motives, rather that he had no capacity to fulfil them. Baxell, ‘Myths’, 14–16; Daniel Kowalsky, *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War* (New York, 2004), 446–9.

Networks, Party and Community

While it is impossible to understand the choice to volunteer without ideology, ideology alone does not provide full insight into the process of making the decision. The overwhelming focus on ideological factors has its roots in the assumption that as 'volunteers', the choice must have come from within and therefore be based on belief. Viewing the International Brigades as being anything other than 'volunteers' is complicated by the language used to describe them: they are almost universally referred to as volunteers, and they consistently used the word to describe themselves. Equally, it is difficult to conclude that any Scots were 'conscripted'.⁵⁹ The Communist Party's limitations lend credence to this – they could in no way emulate the power of a nation state in directly compelling military service. In Scotland, certainly, no individuals were forced to enlist.⁶⁰

Yet direct conscription is not the only way individuals can be induced to fight in wartime. Most importantly, creating the social expectation of military service could be a powerful tool in attracting voluntary recruits. Such methods require a society or specific community to collectively accept the necessity and justification for the conflict, creating an atmosphere in which individuals face constant communal pressure to enlist. Such pressure is compounded by success – the choices of friends, family and colleagues acting as a powerful impetus to

⁵⁹ Francis and Mates refer to 'inner-party conscription' among Welsh miners. Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, 159; Lewis Mates, 'Durham and South Wales Miners and the Spanish Civil War', *Twentieth Century British History* 17:3 (2006), 380. In Palestine, Nir Arielli argues that the volunteers were induced to go not by the Communist Party but by British authorities, Nir Arielli, 'Induced to Volunteer? The Predicament of Jewish Communists in Palestine and the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 46:4 (2011), 854–70.

⁶⁰ Several senior Party figures were asked to go to Spain by the CPGB, e.g. Bob Cooney, *Proud Journey* (London, 2015), 28–9. Tom Murray's file reveals that 'Party District and Central (British) Committees decided that he should volunteer for I. Brigade as a special effort to break through lethargy of official labour leadership.' Murray himself was equivocal: 'His personal view is that... in view of his growing influence and opportunities within the Labour Party, he would probably be of more value by continuing in his present sphere. Nevertheless, he feels that... the Party ought to take final responsibility for a decision.' 'Biographical Notes – MURRAY, Thomas', 17 April 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/176/121; Untitled note, 3 February 1938, NLS, Tom Murray Papers (TMP), Box 1, File 7.

conform. Notably, Britain relied on impetus created by communal appreciations of patriotism and empire to sustain voluntary recruitment in conflicts such as the Boer War and the First World War.⁶¹ Although service on such terms did require a voluntary act, peer pressure and the prospect of social exclusion constituted significant external influences. While the Communist Party was rarely able to compel enlistment, they could foster similar social pressure to enlist in certain spaces throughout Scotland.

As shown in Chapter One, clusters of Scottish recruits converged around locality and politics. A logical extension of this trend is that far from coming together from scattered backgrounds to serve in Spain, recruits were already interconnected, with social ties already existing alongside the political. This implies the existence of communities where social and political identities had become intertwined – meaning political consensus could be channelled into social pressure to conform to the group's expectations. However, this is a theoretical construction based on the observation of broad patterns. To what extent did it reflect the actual experiences of Scottish volunteers?

As with the question of ideology, oral testimony is a crucial resource. However, beyond aforementioned issues regarding narrative influences, the bounds of oral histories are curtailed both by the stated interests of the questioner, and what the interviewee expects their audience to find interesting. Veterans sometimes skipped over factors such as personal relationships and their social

⁶¹ On community identity and recruitment in the Boer War, Brad Beaven, 'The Provincial Press, Civic Ceremony and the Citizen-Soldier During the Boer War, 1899–1902: A Study of Local Patriotism', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 37:2 (2009), 207–28; Stephen Miller, 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899–1902', *Journal of Military History* 69:3 (2005), 703–4. On the First World War, Alexander Watson, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the Great War: A European Phenomenon?' in C. G. Krüger and S. Levsen (eds), *War Volunteering in Modern Times: From the French Revolution to the Second World War* (Basingstoke, 2011), 167–72; John Hartigan, 'Volunteering in the First World War: The Birmingham Experience, August 1914 – May 1915', *Midland History* 24:1 (1999), 175–83; Edward Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting in Yorkshire, 1914–15', *Northern History* 52:2 (2015), 300, 312–3. More generally, Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The raising of the new armies, 1914–16* (Manchester, 1988).

sphere, either out of privacy or believing it was uninteresting.⁶² In particular, most testimony naturally avoids topics that were either painful or shameful. In one case, Eddie Brown's testimony does not mention his wife once, although his friends considered that their deteriorating relationship 'may to a certain extent have accounted for his decision to go to Spain.' Any pre-existing difficulties were compounded when his wife eloped to London after falling pregnant with a fellow Perth communist during his absence in Spain.⁶³ Clearly, his silence did not reflect its irrelevance, but rather an understandable desire to avoid a painful issue. While testimony is occasionally supplemented by contemporary material such as letters, the performative nature of these texts casts doubt on whether they provide complete insight into an individual's choices – their purpose was often to reassure loved ones or affirm political beliefs to their peers.⁶⁴ While these sources still provide insight into the question of why individuals chose to volunteer to fight in Spain, the prominence given to certain factors in testimony and letters should not be regarded as proof of their absolute importance.

Despite these limitations, an analysis of the Scottish volunteers' personal networks confirms that pre-existing personal connections were present on a large scale. The network shown in Figure 2.1 (overleaf) is a depiction of a substantial single network, featuring dozens of interconnected individuals across Scotland. It divides the volunteers into rough geographic clusters by placement and colour, with Glasgow (red) and Edinburgh (blue) at the bottom left and right respectively, and Fife (orange), Dundee (green) and Aberdeen (cyan) above. The strength of each relationship is represented by the thickness of the connecting line, distinguishing between acquaintances, political associates, friends and family.

⁶² This tendency reflects findings in other contexts, e.g. Kathleen Brown and Elizabeth Faue, 'Social Bonds, Sexual Politics, and Political Community on the U.S. Left, 1920s-1940s', *Left History* 7:1 (2000), 10.

⁶³ Lily Murray to 'Tom and Jen', n.d., NLS, TMP, Box 1 File 5.

⁶⁴ Kate Hunter, 'More than an Archive of War: Intimacy and Manliness in the Letters of a Great War Soldier to the Woman He Loved, 1915-1919', *Gender & History* 25:2 (2013), 351; Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York, 1990), 145.

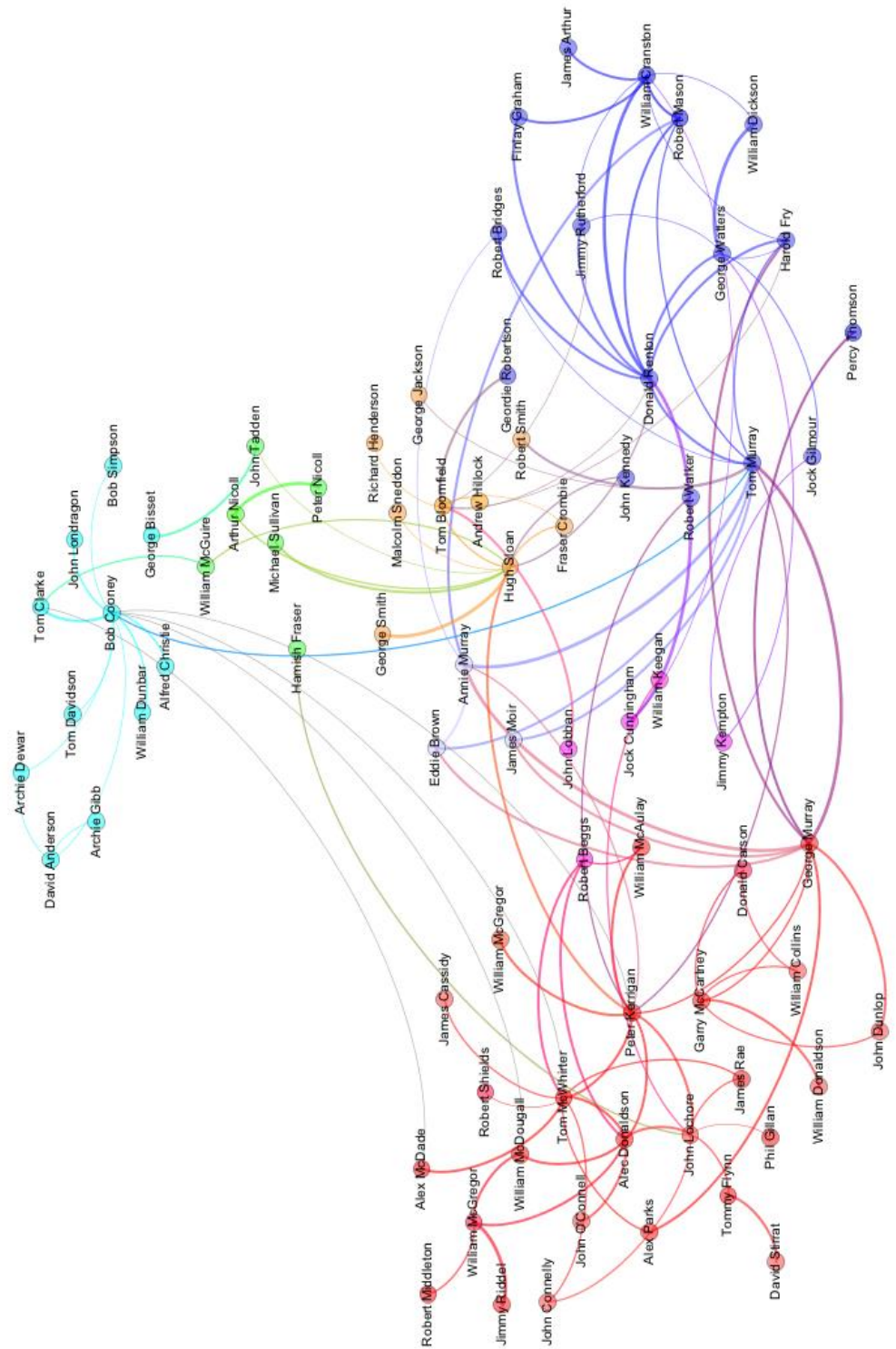


Figure 2.1: Pre-existing ties between Scottish volunteers.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Relationships have only been included if they predated Spain. It is based on information distilled chiefly from oral histories and contemporary correspondence: MacDougall, *Voices from*

Most key hubs are Scottish Communist Party officials such as Peter Kerrigan and Bob Cooney, and many others were important local Party figures. It is natural that such individuals had the most extensive networks, thanks to contacts made at Party conferences, committee meetings and speaking engagements. Yet it is noteworthy that these connections still encompass many less prominent individuals, including some who were not Party members, especially as senior communists are considerably more visible in the source base.⁶⁶ This bias is compounded by the uneven geographic preservation of source material and testimony, with Edinburgh and Aberdeen disproportionately represented compared to Clydeside and Dundee.⁶⁷ This indicates that far from showing the limits of personal connections between volunteers, this diagram represents just a small fraction of pre-existing ties between volunteers, defined by the limits of the source material rather than the networks' actual extent. As suggested in Chapter One, these ties appear to be defined chiefly by locality, social bonds and political activity.

This is confirmed by closer examination of individuals within the network. Hugh Sloan, who was especially forthcoming about his personal relationships, shows how a Communist Party member of middling standing developed connections with future volunteers. From his home in Methil, Sloan knew several local activists who also went to Spain, including his foster brother George Smith, and fellow CPGB member Malcolm Sneddon.⁶⁸ Sloan had also spent time in Dundee in 1933, where he 'acquainted [him]self' with local CPGB members such as Arthur Nicoll, a future political commissar in Spain. These new connections led to his appointment as the Dundee YCL secretary, in which capacity he recruited

the Spanish Civil War; Voices from the Hunger Marches; Voices from War; Voices from Work and Home; NLS, TMP, Boxes 1–4; MML, Boxes D-4, 50; Cooney, *Proud Journey*.

⁶⁶ For example, the correspondence contained within the Tom Murray Papers (TMP) at the NLS and MML, combined with four oral history interviews with family members, allow for a broader appreciation of the Murrays' networks. NLS, TMP, Boxes 1–4; MML, Box D-4, File My; Tom, Annie and George Murray in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 69–74, 101–4, 307–30; Tom Murray in MacDougall, *Voices from Work and Home*, 254–332.

⁶⁷ This reflects uneven coverage in interviews, discussed in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 5.

⁶⁸ Sloan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 233, 236.

several future volunteers to the Party, including William McGuire and John Kennedy. His involvement in the NUWM from 1930 also brought him into contact with organisers and Hunger Marchers across the east of Scotland, including future volunteers Fraser Crombie and Tommy Bloomfield of Kirkcaldy and Jock Tadden of Dundee.⁶⁹ He even met Scottish District Leader and CPGB representative in Spain, Peter Kerrigan, when both attended the Fife miners' gala and discovered a mutual appreciation for ocean swimming.⁷⁰ In all, Sloan mentioned pre-existing relationships with nine other volunteers, including Hunger Marchers, Party members and local colleagues, friends and family.

While Sloan's geographic range of contacts was unusual, it was hardly exceptional – many volunteers had similar histories of activism or internal migration in the 1930s.⁷¹ Other well-connected figures such as George Murray lived in an atmosphere where volunteering was simply a feature of his social circle.

I was active in left-wing politics and of course when the Spanish War started all my mates were of like opinion more or less. A lot of them were going to Spain, you know, and I decided to go too. It was one of the things you did at that particular time.⁷²

Even volunteers with less extensive histories of political activism still tended to know each other. Steven Fullarton, who 'wasn't a member of any party at all', convinced his friend, William Gauntlett, to join him, and knew two other neighbours who had gone to Spain.⁷³ Brothers volunteering together were also relatively common, such as Daniel and George Gillan of Dundee and James and John Miller of Alexandria.⁷⁴ Family, local and Party loyalties were often intertwined: Donald Renton and William Cranston of Portobello were brothers-

⁶⁹ Sloan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 277–82.

⁷⁰ Sloan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 227.

⁷¹ Eddie Brown, like others, was driven 'further afield – Dundee, Perth, Glasgow, Edinburgh, then down to London, picking up work wherever [he] could'. Brown in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 107.

⁷² George Murray in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 101.

⁷³ Fullarton in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 289.

⁷⁴ Mike Arnott, *Dundee and the Spanish Civil War* (Dundee, 2008), 12; *Lanarkshire Catholic Herald*, 24 April 1937, 2.

in-law as well as members of the same CPGB branch.⁷⁵ The impact of others' choices did not need to be immediate, with David Stirrat recalling his 'emotional involvement' after his close friend, Tommy Flynn, 'had gone to Spain early on and been killed.'⁷⁶ Conversely, while Jimmy Maley was the first volunteer from his branch, he noted that 'quite a few' later 'followed [his] example.'⁷⁷ For almost all volunteers for whom relevant evidence exists, it is clear that their choice was not made in isolation. John Dunlop even claimed that rigorous background checks of aspiring recruits was unnecessary as most 'were already known to each other from their home towns.'⁷⁸

This situation was hardly spontaneously, but rather reflected the longstanding use of social and personal connections for Party-building purposes. As Thomas Linehan has noted, communism and family and social ties often became intimately intertwined, with certain kinship groups emerging as 'Party families', of which the Murrays were a prime example.⁷⁹ The process of radicalisation and recruitment described in contemporary sources is often deeply intimate, the product of individual and group relationships, social activity and earnest proselytising. This was a constant, tireless process: a letter from Lily Murray to her sister Margaret updated her on several such cases.

Ida we are getting more and more into our way of thinking and I think we will soon have her 'one of the fold'. They have had her to YCL meetings and J. Moir has also had his sister, who is progressing favourably!⁸⁰

Thanks to such efforts, political spaces influenced by the Party emerged in youth and sporting groups such as Clarion Cycling Clubs. Jimmy Crichton recalled that the Musselburgh Clarion Cycling Club branch he helped found underwent a factional split when it started organising Aid Spain activities, with

⁷⁵ Cranston in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 185–6.

⁷⁶ Stirrat in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 263.

⁷⁷ James Maley, IWMSA, Tape 11947/1.

⁷⁸ 'Dunlop to Kiernan' n.d., NLS, John Dunlop Papers, Acc. 12087, File 3.

⁷⁹ Thomas Linehan, *Communism in Britain, 1920-39: From the Cradle to the Grave* (Manchester, 2007), 67–86.

⁸⁰ Lily to Margaret Murray, 6 March 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 5.

the Catholic and apolitical members leaving and setting up a new club. In Crichton's eyes, political activity was an integral part of the club's purpose and he was more willing to see it split than compromise.⁸¹ This is also reflected in Chris Smith's recollections of his hiking group – it was never 'just hiking', rather 'you always made a point of holding a meeting somewhere, doing something, selling the YCL paper.'⁸² While it officially 'wasn't a YCL club', Mary Johnstone remembered her 'Vikings' cycling club as being dominated by the YCL, who used to 'used to sit and have a lot of political discussions' during outings.⁸³ Some, such as Marion Henry, attended the local Socialist Sunday School, where communists were just one of several parties with a presence from 1930 onwards.⁸⁴ Similarly, John Lochore recalled that the Socialist Sunday School, along with members of his hiking club, proved a ready source of recruits for the Youth contingent of the 1936 Hunger March, in turn a source of recruits for Spain.⁸⁵ Mary Johnstone also remembered that,

We were all Esperantists. That was outside the YCL. But on the other hand you could say a lot of them were political. Some of the teachers were also Party members. It was the Esperanto Society that actually ran the classes.⁸⁶

Few of these spaces were absolutely dominated by the Party, as testimony and indeed the Great Musselburgh Split makes clear. This was part of their utility – they offered an avenue to expand Party membership and influence. Desperate to expand its membership base, the Party seized on these methods as being the most effective way to recruit and retain members. In a circular directed to Fife branches in March 1936, explicit instructions were given on how to achieve their quota of 113 new members. The onus was placed on exploiting the

⁸¹ Crichton in MacDougall, *Voices from Work*, 429.

⁸² Chris Smith, IWMSA, Tape 12290/2.

⁸³ Johnstone in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 243.

⁸⁴ Henry in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 49–50. On Socialist Sunday Schools, see Jessica Gerrard, "'Little Soldiers' for Socialism: Childhood and Socialist Politics in the British Socialist Sunday School Movement', *International Review of Social History* 58:1 (2013), 71–96.

⁸⁵ Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 320–1.

⁸⁶ Johnstone in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 243.

personal connections of existing members, as well as the latent sympathies of individuals already under some Communist influence, calling for:

The mining fractions in East and West Fife and the Rail and Textile fractions in Kirkcaldy to arrange special meetings for the purpose of discussing the Party and its importance to the workers in those industries. Sympathisers and contacts to be invited with the objective of recruiting them to the Party.

Specially prepared recruiting meetings organised by branches in each Area. Each branch member to be responsible for bringing along TU, Co-operative or labour Party contacts; members of Study classes etc, Youth from sport organisations [original emphasis].⁸⁷

The circular went on to highlight the importance of engaging socially with new recruits:

We draw attention to the importance of Social activity by our Branches, which the Secretariat and Area Committees will do everything to encourage. Also the Educational Classes and Open branch meetings on important local issues in the Area, pit and factory [original emphasis].

Social activities have a two-fold value; not only is the work of the Party lightened and its contacts widened, but a source of income is created for assisting in carrying on the general Party activities.⁸⁸

By using such tactics, the Communist Party had done more than foster a new generation of revolutionary cadres. They created groups of friends. The role of friendship, social expectations and peer pressure in aiding recruitment efforts is well established in other contexts. Yet the importance of these social interconnections in understanding the recruitment process has been either ignored or dismissed as 'not a cardinal factor' in existing history writing on the International Brigades.⁸⁹ In Spain too, however, personal decisions to enlist cannot be regarded as distinct from the decisions made by volunteers' peers.

This alters any understanding of the decision to fight in Spain. Volunteering became in part a group decision, based on a collective rather than individual understanding of the conflict's meaning. The involvement of friends meant that

⁸⁷ 'Fife District Plan', March 1936, RGASPI, 495/14/194/38-9.

⁸⁸ 'Fife District Plan', March 1936, RGASPI.

⁸⁹ MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 5.

going to Spain was no longer a venture into the complete unknown, as individuals could still rely on much the same support networks as they did at home. More fundamentally, it meant that group members were subject to external pressure from their peers – once they had collectively decided that volunteering was the appropriate response to the war in Spain, the pressure to follow through and commit to this course of action was considerable, and any individual defying this decision risked losing respect or standing. Volunteering could also become a way in which to demonstrate commitment, both in an abstract political sense but also to the group identity, making the decision to enlist as much about maintaining social standing and reputation as fulfilling a personalised political imperative.

In many ways, the decision cut right to the heart of what it meant to be a communist in this period. Being a communist required subscribing not just to a set of political goals, but also accepting the need for direct action and personal sacrifice to achieve these goals.⁹⁰ This meant demonstrating a willingness to forgo safety and fight for a common cause – in the words of Glasgow-Irish volunteer Sydney Quinn, ‘you’ve got to put your life where your mouth was.’⁹¹ Maintaining a communist identity in this context also became bound up with their other concerns – in particular a masculine, ‘hard man’ self-image rooted in Scottish working-class identity, which required standing by one’s friends, particularly in a fight.⁹² This all left little room for individual worries about personal safety or aptitude for fighting, which might otherwise have deterred potential recruits. Moreover, once made in a social context, the decision to volunteer needed to be followed through with action – someone who decided to volunteer in isolation might abandon the project while disappointing only

⁹⁰ Linehan, *Communism in Britain*, 92–114.

⁹¹ Quinn, TLS, MS, Tape 202.

⁹² The ‘hard man’ archetype has a long history, particularly in a Glaswegian-industrial context. Annmarie Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland, 1919–1939* (Edinburgh, 2010), 3–4; Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor, ‘Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies: Masculinity in the Clydeside Heavy Industries, c.1930–1970s’, *Labour History Review* 69:2 (2004), 135–51; Hilary Young, ‘Hard Man, New Man: Re/Composing Masculinities in Glasgow, c. 1950–2000’, *Oral History* 35:1 (2007), 71–2.

themselves, but for most volunteers, abandoning the decision meant disappointing their friends, an altogether different prospect.

It is not difficult to imagine how, in the charged political atmosphere of the time, these pressures might multiply and accumulate, as more and more individuals chose to go to Spain. As recruitment for the International Brigades reached its zenith over the winter of 1936-7, volunteering for Spain almost became the norm rather than the exception. The centrality of this particular period for Scottish recruitment is hard to overstate. It represents the point at which a trickle of isolated individuals turned into a critical mass, with groups of friends and acquaintances volunteering together becoming common. The importance of this phenomenon for Scotland compared to the rest of Britain is highlighted by arrival patterns. Nearly half of all Scottish volunteers left between December 1936 and February 1937. In contrast, recruitment in England, Wales and Ireland was more evenly spread, with just over a quarter arriving in these three months.⁹³ This points to a recruitment rush particular to Scotland, with decisions to volunteer cascading throughout tight-knit communities, and collective enthusiasm outweighing any doubts. In such an atmosphere, choosing not to go to Spain could become a decision needing considerable justification and soul-searching rather than the other way around.

These pressures are particularly apparent among a much-neglected group: those who considered volunteering but did not. Like those who refused to serve in more conventional conflicts, the lionisation of the International Brigades has left little space for those who subscribed to the same beliefs but chose not to fight.⁹⁴ Recounting their choice not to go to Spain decades later still evoked defensive responses amongst many of the activists who were part of the same social-political circles as the volunteers. Several such perspectives are found in Ian MacDougall's various oral history projects, as well as one published

⁹³ This is extrapolating from Baxell's study, which provided an arrival date for 1,500 British volunteers. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 17.

⁹⁴ Similar points are raised in Cynthia Eller, 'Oral History as Moral Discourse: Conscientious Objectors and the Second World War', *Oral History Review* 18:1 (1990), 45-8.

autobiography.⁹⁵ In all, ten such accounts were found, a considerable number given that MacDougall located just twenty-three Spanish veterans after years of searching, while the inclusion of these 'near-misses' was an unintended by-product of other projects. They tend to fall into two categories. Some, such as Tommy Kerr and John Carroll, were on the periphery of Party circles. Kerr was still in the process of joining the Communist Party when he considered volunteering.

Aboot joinin' the International Brigade maself, well, the funny thing, ye know, ah kind o' regret it tae some extent. But there was only one time ever there wis an approach, and it wis a casual meetin', because ah hadnae been in nae party at the time... ah used tae go intae the pub tae meet, ken, some o' the pals, and I met Fred Douglas either when ah wis comin' oot or gaun in and the question wis raised aboot recruits for the International Brigade. But it never went nae further. Oh, well, ah never volunteered.⁹⁶

Similarly, Carroll recalled that volunteering 'widna ha' took much, you know. if there had been a boy there that said, "Right, get on wi' it," we might ha' been on it.' Carroll was also not a Party member at the time although, like Kerr, he was part of the same social sphere.⁹⁷ Without the sustained pressure that might have come from an immediate friend making the same decision or being tied more closely to the community, their thoughts never translated into action.

The other accounts come from those more fully integrated into the requisite social-political circles – seven of the eight recalled that their decision was made in the context of close friends enlisting.⁹⁸ Their responses make it clear that they sought to defer their own agency – maintaining their identity as dedicated anti-fascists required that they demonstrated a thwarted desire to go to Spain. That is not to say that the various reasons given were illegitimate, yet it is also clear that even decades later, they wanted to avoid being perceived as having shirked

⁹⁵ Jack Caplan, *Memories of the Gorbals* (Edinburgh, 1991), 55–6.

⁹⁶ Kerr in MacDougall, *Voices from Work*, 93.

⁹⁷ He 'did work for the Communists' and went camping with the local YCL. Carroll in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 360–1.

⁹⁸ The other, John Lennox, certainly knew various volunteers, but does not discuss this directly. Lennox in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 375, 390.

their duty. James Allison of Kirkcaldy was the most open about this in retrospect, admitting was not ‘an awfy brave man.’ Yet when two friends decided to volunteer, and looked to Allison to join them, he still seized on other reasons to avoid joining them, claiming that ‘I wid like tae go but I know if I was oot there I widnae eat and they would need tae send me hame.’⁹⁹

Most claimed to have wanted to volunteer, or taken active steps to do so, but were thwarted by a higher power. Jack Caplan and Guy Bolton blamed the official British ban on volunteers in early 1937 – in Bolton’s case, on the very day he departed from Lesmahagow with two friends seeking to volunteer.¹⁰⁰ When Jimmy Crichton attempted to enlist, the local organiser refused to let him go before finishing his apprenticeship, similarly, Thomas Davidson was rejected as he was newly married.¹⁰¹ William McVicar, having enlisted in the RAF prior to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, claimed to have been convinced by his friend Michael Clark to go to Spain. This put him in a difficult position: he would have risked prosecution as a deserter. He still went to pains to point out, however, that the ultimate decision was not his, but rather his peers’, who decided that ‘they couldn’t guarantee that [he] could get out of the country before the RAF would start lookin’ for [him].’¹⁰²

Others deferred to the needs of their families. John Brown, whose friend attempted to convince him to volunteer, was uncomfortable leaving his mother alone, especially since his father had died in the Great War.¹⁰³ John Lennox had already volunteered when his then-girlfriend threatened to dump him if he actually went – Lennox cheerfully admitted that in light of their long, happy marriage, he could not regret missing out.¹⁰⁴ Leaving their family without support was an obvious sticking point for many recruits, but was ameliorated

⁹⁹ Allison in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 131.

¹⁰⁰ Caplan, *Memories of the Gorbals*, 55–6; Guy Bolton in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 346.

¹⁰¹ Crichton in MacDougall, *Voices from Work and Home*, 92; Davidson in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 255.

¹⁰² McVicar in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 179.

¹⁰³ Crichton in MacDougall, *Voices from Work and Home*, 92.

¹⁰⁴ Lennox in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 390.

by the Communist Party's pledge to provide for dependants.¹⁰⁵ The importance of this pledge should not be underestimated – while volunteers were certainly not mercenaries, it is doubtful that many would have been willing to leave their families destitute, especially as some already faced accusations that they were abandoning their responsibilities.¹⁰⁶ One volunteer, Glaswegian Thomas McColl, went so far to claim while in Spain that if the Communist Party failed to support his mother adequately, it meant 'the agreement with [him] was broken and no longer binding', justifying his immediate repatriation to support his family.¹⁰⁷ For McColl, and doubtless many others, service in Spain was undertaken with specific expectations and preconditions, and any violation was grounds for reassessing their decision.

An unsympathetic reading of these narratives might suggest that these individuals were seizing pretexts to avoid following through on a daunting decision. The British ban on volunteers in January 1937, for instance, was poorly enforced and many others subsequently made it to Spain despite it.¹⁰⁸ However, such readings are speculative, and there are no specific grounds to question the sincerity of the testimony. What is telling is that they all felt it necessary to provide justification in the first place. For those at the heart of the Scottish communist movement, for whom the vital nature of the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigades was deeply impressed and whose friends were making the decision to fight, not going was not simply a matter of polite refusal or ignoring the call. To maintain their social and political standing, not to mention their own self-image, they needed a concrete justification for staying.

These accounts also help confirm that participation in communist politics was linked to belonging to the requisite social circles, and this in turn meant that for those embedded in the movement, the choice to fight in Spain was partly a product of group dynamics. While ideology is clearly not irrelevant, the

¹⁰⁵ Bill Alexander, *British Volunteers For Liberty* (London, 1982), 140-1.

¹⁰⁶ Nicoll, TLS, MS, Tape 956.

¹⁰⁷ McColl to 'Mother', 25 August 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/169/58.

¹⁰⁸ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 6.

presence of others in the decision-making process meant that rather than being a passing consideration, as it was for Kerr and Carroll, it was impossible to avoid making an active decision so long as volunteering was continually being discussed and acted upon by one's peers. This in turn helps explain why Spain saw so such a large volunteering phenomenon. Unlike many other instances, where foreign fighters generally enlisted alone for their own reasons, the concentration of recruitment within such specific social-political circles meant that instead of recruiting isolated individuals, the International Brigades recruited in clusters, multiplying their numbers considerably.

As suggested in Chapter One, the nature and influence of the social networks behind recruitment for the International Brigades indicates the causes of Scotland's exceptional levels of volunteering. It was the Communist Party's ability to build communities that transcended politics that served it best when recruiting for the International Brigades. Amid the plethora of ways the CPGB attempted to expand its influence in the 1930s, the Communist Party never developed the intellectual influence in Scotland that the Party had in England – their star recruit, Hugh MacDiarmid, was universally considered to be more trouble than he was worth – nor did they manage to dominate a trade union as with the South Wales Miners' Federation.¹⁰⁹ Their membership numbers lagged behind London. Yet by fostering localised political communities based on dynamic activism, they had adopted an approach that would prove notably effective when it came to mobilising their followers to fight in Spain.

Scottish Political Communities

Although it is tempting to reach for narratives of exceptionalism to explain the CPGB's relative success in building political communities across Scotland, and

¹⁰⁹ Antipathy to MacDiarmid surfaced several times, notably in 1937 when the Scottish District attempted to expel him. 'Membership Appeals' CPGB Conference May 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/227/183. Although he successfully appealed, MacDiarmid's erratic behaviour finally led to his expulsion in 1939. CPGB Central Committee Meeting, 18 February 1939, RGASPI, 495/14/265/254.

assume it was a product of innate Scottish progressiveness, this does not suffice. Even if true, this account has already shown that communist influence has no straightforward measure, and their particular approach in Scotland requires explanation.¹¹⁰ A more convincing answer lies in the specific political cultures of the Scottish left, cultures that predated the Communist Party yet continued to affect its development during the interwar period. In particular, the ILP's influence shaped the way in which the Communist Party operated in Scotland. Not only did many of their Scottish leaders have formative political experiences in the ILP during its heyday, the necessity of competing directly with the ILP during the 1930s also influenced its tactics and necessitated a degree of imitation. Throughout Scotland, the 'ILP's domination of labour politics until the party's disaffiliation from the Labour party in 1932' influenced how politics was lived and understood in a variety of ways.¹¹¹ This in turn reflected the divergent evolution of working-class politics in Scotland, which favoured structures that were more decentralised, democratic and local – fostering, in other words, a culture that greatly facilitated community-led approaches.¹¹² While it is important to distinguish between aspiration and reality – no group was fully successful in building the kind of party they envisaged – the direction of their efforts were still important. Moreover, given that the volunteering phenomenon was objectively small, even limited successes suffice to help explain it.

The impact of the ILP's disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932 indicates their centrality to Scottish progressive politics in the period.¹¹³ The Labour Party lost their entire network of local representation – according to McKinlay and Smyth, 'in 1932 the Labour Party was little more than a shell organisation

¹¹⁰ For a comparative perspective on communist political communities in Scotland and Britain, see Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn, *Communists and British Society, 1920-1991* (London, 2007), 56–76.

¹¹¹ Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, 38–9.

¹¹² This is one of William Kenefick's contentions, see *Rebellious and Contrary: The Glasgow Dockers, 1853–1932* (East Linton, 2000), 7–9; *Red Scotland!*, 2. It is echoed in R. Morris, 'The ILP, 1893–1932' in McKinlay and Morris (eds.), *The ILP on the Clydeside*, 14–15.

¹¹³ On these developments, with particular regard to Scotland, Gidon Cohen, 'The Independent Labour Party, Disaffiliation, Revolution and Standing Orders', *History* 86:282 (2001), 212–14.

still dominated by the ILP.’¹¹⁴ This was especially true in Glasgow, where the ILP managed to survive disaffiliation from the Labour Party, retaining multiple Parliamentary and local government representatives throughout the 1930s, with their influence in local government actually peaking in 1935-6.¹¹⁵ While their days of hegemony in Scottish labour politics were over by the time of the Spanish Civil War, their influence in shaping the nature of socialism in Scotland remained.

Key to understanding this influence is the nature of the ILP’s aspirational vision. According to Morris, the ILP attempted a different approach to socialism.

The experience of the Glasgow Labour movement was of thriving community politics. The ILP was a party at the centre of a network, harnessing the energies of everything from Socialist Sunday Schools and Clarion Clubs to the Co-op and Trades Council. Such experience brought a confidence in decentralised socialism which many trades union leaders and London intellectuals did not share. The difference between Attlee and Maxton was not a matter of left and further left but of democratic centralism versus diffused community authority.¹¹⁶

The ILP privileged local branches and community building over centralised, powerful leadership, with ‘the first loyalty of the individual ILP-er [being] to his or her own branch, not to the city or national organisation.’¹¹⁷ It conceived of political parties as having purpose beyond political organisation, with a role in providing ‘social, educational and cultural activities.’¹¹⁸ It was a strategy in which success depended on the party’s ability to sustain social networks alongside political belief – in other words, fostering the sort of interconnections that underpin the analysis presented here.

¹¹⁴ Alan McKinlay and James Smyth, ‘The end of “the agitator workman”: 1926–1932’ in McKinlay and Morris (eds.), *The ILP on the Clydeside*, 199.

¹¹⁵ J. J. Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow, 1896–1936* (East Linton, 2000), 192–3.

¹¹⁶ Morris, ‘The ILP, 1893–1932’, 14.

¹¹⁷ McKinlay and Smyth, ‘The end of “the agitator workman”’, 183. This was reflected to some extent throughout the Scottish labour movement. Kenefick, *Red Scotland*, 2.

¹¹⁸ McKinlay and Smyth, ‘The end of “the agitator workman”’, 199. See also Knox, although he places emphasis on the moralism which underpinned these efforts, and on local agency as a continuance of Scottish radical tradition. William Knox, ‘The Red Clydesiders’ in Terry Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter, and Party: Traditions of revolt and protest in modern Scottish History* (Aberdeen, 1989), 93–4, 100.

The ILP was a very different organisation to the CPGB, and it does not necessarily follow that the communists aped their approach to party building. However, there are indications that the CPGB did pursue similar strategies throughout Scotland. The language Stuart Macintyre uses when discussing 'Little Moscovs', for instance, shows striking parallels to the description of the ILP presented by McKinlay, Smyth and Morris.

The relationship of the Communists to the community was therefore ambiguous... the Party organised sport, musical events, evening socials and so on... It was also significant that Party members occupied an accepted place in the community, based on an extensive network of kin and friendship. The identity of the left was much broader than politics in the conventional sense.¹¹⁹

The widespread interconnections between the International Brigade volunteers discussed above suggests that the phenomenon Macintyre observed was not limited to rural settlements, but also existed in more diverse urban spaces. Neil Rafeek noted similar trends in Glasgow – the Communist Party's ability to function not just as a political entity, but to become the focus of a wider community.¹²⁰ Politics became entwined with everyday social and recreational activity in Party strongholds throughout Scotland, much as it had for the ILP before it.

There are several reasons why the Communist Party might emulate the ILP. Although communists were nominally subordinate to both national and international directives, in practice local traditions of organising and conceptions of radical politics retained much importance.¹²¹ Prominent activists such as Harry McShane, organiser of the Glasgow NUWM and the Gorbals CPGB branch, had learned their trade in the ILP at its peak.¹²² Even by the late 1930s,

¹¹⁹ Macintyre, *Little Moscovs*, 107.

¹²⁰ Rafeek, *Communist Women*, 25–41. This is echoed in the observation that only Glasgow and London were able to 'sustain a network of [Communist Party] social and cultural institutions', Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 7–8.

¹²¹ Rafeek, *Communist Women*, 41.

¹²² Harry McShane and J. Smith (ed.), *No Mean Fighter* (London, 1976), 25–6; also McShane in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 16–28. Many older volunteers had similar connections. Tom Murray, for instance, was an ILP member until 1931. 'Biographical Notes – MURRAY, Thomas', 17 April 1938, RGASPI.

many younger activists had previously been ILP members. YCL and NUWM organiser John Lochore, for instance, pointed to his time in the ILP youth wing as impressing him with the importance of social activity and being ‘in the roots of the people.’¹²³ These ties were compounded by the competitive nature of progressive politics in interwar Scotland. This was partly due to Labour’s aforementioned difficulties in dominating labour politics at the time, with the new Labour Party secretary in Scotland, Arthur Woodburn, remarking that his task was to ‘practically build from scratch.’¹²⁴ His efforts were alternatively aided and hindered by the efforts of ILP defectors, notably Patrick Dollan, who founded the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), theoretically as a new Labour affiliate but in practice often competing for resources and representation.¹²⁵ This allowed considerable space for other progressive parties to operate. Again, Glasgow provided the richest opportunities during the 1930s, with Labour, the SSP, the ILP, communists and anarchists all striving to effectively expound their vision of socialist progression – quite often in a literal sense, with rival speakers attempting to outdo each other on the streets in rhetoric and volume.¹²⁶ To succeed, communists needed to challenge the other parties’ strengths – particularly the ILP’s entrenched community presence in many of Glasgow’s poorest districts.¹²⁷ This involved not just enunciating a rival political message, but attempting to create a rival grassroots community.

Importantly for their recruitment efforts, the communists were also well placed to attract those keenest for direct action. It was this attraction that enabled the NUWM’s campaigns – for those who wanted to challenge the system, it was the

¹²³ Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices From The Hunger Marches*, 316.

¹²⁴ Arthur Woodburn, *Some Recollections* [unpublished autobiography], NLS, Acc. 7656, Box 4, File 3, 68.

¹²⁵ Donnachie, ‘Scottish Labour in the depression’, 60.

¹²⁶ This atmosphere pervades memories of this period, see the ‘vociferous groups on the pavements’ in Ralph Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals* (London, 1997), 39; or Garry McCartney’s testimony in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 241.

¹²⁷ The attention paid to the ILP by Communist leadership in Scotland (and London) shows this clearly. E.g. Central Committee Meeting, 5 January 1936, RGASPI, 495/14/185/51. The Communists also monitored the ILP newspaper and spied on their major conferences, ‘The ILP Conference’, 27 April 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/253/81–85; ‘Review of the New Leader’, 3 February 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/244/68.

communists whose rhetoric was most satisfactory, as was their track record of revolutionary success overseas.¹²⁸ This is reflected in the recollections of activists from the time. When Tom Fern became interested in socialist politics, he carefully considered which party to join, and made up his mind after coming 'to the conclusion that the Communist Party was the party that was putting up the greatest fight on behalf of the working class.'¹²⁹ The ILP's commitment to parliamentarianism and pacifism appealed less to a younger, angry demographic looking for immediate, decisive answers.¹³⁰ This yearning to do, not just observe or protest, is one that shaped many International Brigade volunteers' political choices before Spain, and acted as mental preparation for personally intervening in a foreign conflict.

It is necessary to be wary of overgeneralising political cultures across Scotland, particularly given Glasgow's exceptional status as 'the politically most advanced city in Britain' in the eyes of the Communist Party.¹³¹ As William Kenefick notes, the focus on the politics in the west of Scotland 'marginalis[es] and often ignor[es] events taking place elsewhere in Scotland', but it does not necessarily follow that these events were fuelled by precisely the same political cultures by virtue of their happening in the same country.¹³² Malcolm Petrie, for instance, has shown that Dundee's political climate on the eve of the Spanish Civil War was shaped by the relative absence of ILP influence, and the early polarisation of politics between the Labour Party and communism.¹³³ However, the evidence discussed here does still indicate that Scottish recruitment for the International Brigades was underpinned by the way in which the Communist Party had gone about organising itself across Scotland in the years beforehand. These methods,

¹²⁸ With unemployment and the NUWM especially, the Communists were able to build on grassroots resistance to government policy, see Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, 193–8.

¹²⁹ Fern in Iain MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 137.

¹³⁰ Bob Cooney dedicates several chapters of his autobiography to contrasting the communist approach to combatting fascism with the passivity of the ILP. Cooney, *Proud Journey*, 15–27.

¹³¹ *Daily Worker*, 1 May 1939, 1.

¹³² Kenefick, *Red Scotland!*, 7.

¹³³ Malcolm Petrie, 'Unity from Below? The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Labour and the Left in Aberdeen and Dundee, 1936–1939', *Labour History Review* 79:3 (2015), 311–12.

in turn, owed as much to the context of Scottish radical traditions as they did to the communists' particular brand of political activism.

Conclusions

The aim of this and the preceding chapter has been to explain why Scots volunteered to fight in Spain in such large numbers relative to the rest of Britain. This is not a question that previous accounts have been able to answer convincingly. Even where Scotland was the primary subject, the limitations of an ideology-driven approach meant that any answers were implicitly framed by Scottish exceptionalism. In considering a broader spectrum of ideological and other motivations, this account has not only provided a fuller picture of why Spain attracted so many volunteers from Scotland and elsewhere, but also shown that other explanations are possible. Scots were not necessarily distinguished by being inherently more radical than other Britons; rather methods of political organisation in Scotland leant themselves particularly well to this endeavour. These methods, in turn, were not a spontaneous invention in reaction to Spain but the product of political cultures that date back to the nineteenth century or beyond. It is likely that the Communist Party themselves had little idea why recruitment in Scotland proved so much more effective than elsewhere. This explanation raises another interesting possibility – if recruitment really was so intense among specific Scottish networks, then it follows that these networks would likely continue to function after being transplanted to Spain. The next chapter takes up this question, and examines the extent that Scottish networks continued to operate in the International Brigades.

These findings are applicable well beyond the Scottish case study. Explanations for why so many people across the world volunteered specifically to fight in the International Brigades have often been limited in effectiveness for the same reasons as accounts dealing with Britain, and might be enriched by considering the impact of political communities and organisation in other contexts. Key to

applying this approach is a detailed knowledge of who the volunteers are, and the sort of interconnections that might exist between them. As both chapters have demonstrated, it is possible to consider even a relatively small number of foreign fighters as coming from a cohesive community rather than as scattered amongst a more general population. This may challenge R. Dan Richardson's longstanding conclusion regarding recruitment patterns for the International Brigades, suggesting that numbers dwindled as news of 'political terror' and high casualties reached home.¹³⁴ Such a position supposes that there was a large pool of untapped recruits left by 1938 – the pattern observed here suggests instead that the Communist Party had largely exhausted its limited networks, and substantial further recruitment was only possible by growing the Party itself, which proceeded slowly.

In the broader comparative context, this approach can shed light on a much broader question: why did Spain attract so many foreign volunteers, and by extension, what factors are crucial in enabling the large-scale participation of foreign fighters in conflicts? One important distinction that emerges is the difference between 'spontaneous' and 'recruited' foreign fighters. The volunteers who journeyed to Spain before the advent of the International Brigades were qualitatively and quantitatively different than those who came later. These early months saw only small numbers of more mobile, better-resourced individuals who had volunteered for their own reasons, often in isolation from others in their lives. Their decisions were internalised, making for very personal motivations, be it boredom, material gain or ideology. Many sufficiently accessible and well-publicised conflicts might expect to see comparable numbers of highly disparate, self-motivated volunteers. The sheer diversity of such individuals – thanks to their self-determined and varied motivations for fighting – makes establishing patterns difficult, and in Spain's case at least, has led to a deceptive heterogeneity in how the volunteers are imagined.

¹³⁴ R. Dan Richardson, *Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (Lexington, 1982), 80.

However, following the Comintern's decision to actively organise and enable recruitment in October 1936, volunteering changed profoundly. The volunteers became not just more numerous, but also much more cohesive in terms of class, background and beliefs, and tended to have come from specific social-political circles. Certainly, aid in making the journey to Spain was an important factor. Yet Spain is far from the only case in which volunteers were actively recruited or had their journeys arranged for them, with comparable efforts made to recruit the Mahal in the Israeli War of Independence, among other instances.¹³⁵ The key question becomes why the Comintern was so well placed to recruit volunteers for Spain. Part of the answer is clearly ideological, with communism and anti-fascism particularly well suited to transnational mobilisation. These ideologies are inherently internationalist, which meant that volunteers did not merely go to defend the 'Spanish people', they went believing that they were defending their own homes against future fascist expansionism. Significantly, Spain was readily appreciated as the decisive battlefield in the struggle against fascism, dwarfing the scale and stakes of the battle at home. Envisaging the overseas battlefield in Spain as a space in which personal ideological battles might be fought – and won – proved a major attraction for Scottish volunteers. While non-internationalist ideologies have the capacity to cross borders, they are far more reliant on circumstances and perception. While anti-communist Swedish nationalists – especially those in the military – readily appreciated the need to help defend Finland in 1940 as an extension of their own interests, few anti-communists living further away felt the same urgency.¹³⁶ Ethnic or diasporic connections might also serve to motivate specific groups to fight in a

¹³⁵ Nir Arieli, 'When are foreign volunteers useful? Israel's transnational soldiers in the war of 1948 re-examined', *Journal of Military History* 78:2 (2014), 703–24. See also David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civic Conflicts* (Oxford, 2013), 127–57.

¹³⁶ Martina Sprague, *Swedish Volunteers in the Russo-Finnish Winter War, 1939–40* (Jefferson, 2010), 53–73.

foreign conflict, but these connections are strictly bounded.¹³⁷ Communism and anti-fascism, in contrast, were truly global ideologies.

Just as important as ideology, however, was the nature of communist parties throughout the world. Thanks to their revolutionary doctrine and ethos, they tended to contain disproportionate numbers of individuals for whom direct action was appealing, even when their membership was small. Moreover, the intensity of their struggle bound them together closely. Being a Communist Party member was not a hobby – it was a way of life, shaping members' social circles alongside their political activities. Communism, in other words, was often a community as much as a party. This meant that in exceptional circumstances, the community could be mobilised to defend itself and its interests. As seen in the Scottish case, recruitment was fostered by communal pressures and understandings as much as abstract political ideals. In fact, the exceptional level of Scottish recruitment for the International Brigades can best be understood as a by-product of the Communist Party's relative success in adopting a community-led approach to party building in Scotland. This combination of well-established ideological communities for a recruitment base and a conflict appearing as the decisive battlefield for a global, internationalist ideology is distinct in modern history, and offers the best explanation for the unmatched scale of the International Brigades. Only the recent rise of pan-Islamism – and its temporary breakthrough in Syria and Iraq – offers a parallel, and it is perhaps no coincidence that the Syrian Civil War has featured the largest mobilisation of foreign fighters since the Spanish Civil War.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Nir Arielli and Bruce Collins, 'Conclusions: Jihadists, Diasporas and Professional Contractors: The Resurgence of Non-state Recruitment since the 1980s' in Collins and Arielli (eds.), *Transnational Soldiers*, 250-6.

¹³⁸ Thomas Hegghammer, 'The rise of Muslim foreign fighters', *International Security* 35:3 (2010), 53-94. See also Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 158-93.

Section Two: Spain

Chapter Three: Networks and Experience

Although the disproportionate numbers of Scots in the International Brigades can be clearly linked to Scotland's distinctive political cultures, it is less clear whether being Scottish continued to matter after they had left for Spain. As Scots never had their own unit, as national contingents often did, it is difficult to isolate a specific Scottish experience of service in Spain. Scots were sent to the same places as their English, Welsh and other comrades in the British Battalion, fought in the same battles and suffered through the same conditions. Any distinctiveness, if it exists, must stem from social and cultural causes. Yet even the label of 'Scottishness' brings with it problematic stereotypes and assumptions, and it is used here purely as a descriptor for those volunteers who came from Scotland, as defined in Chapter One. Any meaning ascribed to Scottishness beyond a degree of mutually recognised shared identity is drawn from the evidence presented here rather than preconceived notions of national character. Although expressions of a Scottish cultural identity did take place in Spain, the scattered occurrences as well as their inherent ambiguity reinforces rather than undermines the argument made here that the influence of identities can best be understood outside of the paradigm of national exceptionalism.

Although Scottish exceptionalism has implicitly underpinned existing explanations of recruitment for the International Brigades in Scotland, historians have been more reticent in exploring any distinctive aspects to their actual experiences. One refreshing feature of Ian MacDougall's analysis is the frank admission that,

The experiences in Spain of the Scots volunteers were much as those of the other 50 or so nationalities represented in the International

Brigades. Within the British contingent itself, the distinctive contribution of the Scots volunteers was their disproportionately high number.¹

This is in contrast to many other accounts that ascribe exceptionality to various national contingents, often in terms of their military capabilities. Even Michael Petrou's otherwise excellent account succumbs to this trope, claiming that the rugged, individualistic and egalitarian Canadians were the best fighters in Spain.² Other national accounts often stress the perceived value of 'their' national unit as elite shock troops, each with a supposedly exceptional reputation even among other Internationals.³ However, such claims are often based on stereotype, internal propaganda and volunteers' own self-perceptions.⁴ Attempts to glorify each contingent can also lead to strange contradictions: while some British accounts stress the duplicity of Nationalist troops in singing *The Internationale* to confuse and capture a British unit, Italian accounts speak proudly of capturing a fascist Italian unit by speaking Italian and giving the appropriate salute to catch them off guard.⁵ One can also echo Michael Jackson's unease at the very discourse of 'shock troops' in this context, given the brutal, mismatched nature of the fighting and resulting casualty rates.⁶

In delving into the lived experience of the Scottish volunteers, it is necessary to go beyond much of the scholarly literature dealing with the International Brigades. Many existing accounts do go to some efforts to address the day-to-day physical experience – the food, insects, shortages and discomfort. Yet the physical aspects of volunteering are the most universal; it is not in diet or comfort that a distinctive Scottish experience is likely to emerge. Rather, the focus here is on the personal, cultural and social. This chapter builds on the

¹ Ian MacDougall, 'The Scottish Soldier Abroad', NLS, Ian MacDougall Papers, File 35.

² Michael Petrou, *Renegades* (2008), 43–5, 111–12.

³ E.g. Cecil Eby, *Comrades and Commissars* (Pennsylvania, 2007), 25–31; Peter Carroll, *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (Stanford, 1994), 91–2, 102; Amirah Inglis, *Australians in the Spanish Civil War* (Sydney, 1987), 124–6, 146

⁴ Gerben Zaagsma, "'Red Devils': The Botwin Company in the Spanish Civil War", *East European Jewish Affairs* 33:1 (2003), 92.

⁵ Venturino Venturini, *The Last Great Cause: Volunteers from Australia and Emilia-Romagna* (Sydney, 2010), 357; Baxell discusses the historiography of the British incident. Richard Baxell, *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2004), 74–6.

⁶ Michael Jackson, *Fallen Sparrows* (Philadelphia, 1994), 102–9.

argument that Scots volunteered in such large numbers because of well-developed local political subcultures, which fostered friendship and social connections as well as political radicalism. Beyond the impact on recruitment, this also meant that Scots went to Spain already knowing many of their 'new' comrades. This has profound implications for how the conflict was experienced. It contradicts many of the tropes of military service, especially of friendship being forged in battle among strangers thrown together by chance. Here, friendships had already been forged in earlier political struggles and social interactions. The question of how this influenced the experience of volunteering has broader relevance beyond Scotland, with similarities likely to exist wherever sizeable local clusters of volunteers are found.

Histories dealing with the social and cultural experiences of International Brigade volunteers have been slow in appearing. One exception is Elizabeth Roberts' work, which argues that in a 'fractious political climate', dress and demeanour took on significance in establishing hierarchies, determining orthodoxy and conferring authority, pointing to a 'complex and multi-faceted realm of experience and discourse.'⁷ However, Roberts' intervention is weakened by the reliance on published sources, which is problematic here as the working-class Scottish volunteers left behind few such accounts. Research into the lived experience of soldiers in the First World War present some useful parallels, particularly smaller-scale studies such as Helen McCartney's work on the Liverpool Territorials. Combining analysis of the socioeconomic and cultural contours of Edwardian Liverpool with the use of personal primary sources such as soldiers' letters, the book highlights continuities between Liverpudlian communities and service in France. McCartney touches on many topics discussed here, notably communication between the front and home, the impact of recruitment from tight-knit communities and pre-existing relationships

⁷ Elizabeth Roberts, 'British and American Volunteers and the Politics of Dress and Demeanour in the Spanish Civil War', *Limina* 14 (2008) 59–60.

among soldiers, although the differences in context and focus are significant.⁸ More broadly, Alexander Watson's work suggests that soldiers' cultural backgrounds have an appreciable impact on their service, while cautioning against making assumptions based on stereotype.⁹

This chapter discusses two ways in which the volunteers' Scottish origins played a role in Spain, and the effects each had on the volunteering experience. The first is the existence of unofficial Scottish groupings. Due to the processes of enlistment, which allowed those with pre-existing ties to stick together, small Scottish clusters formed within larger official formations. Aside from the impact this had on day-to-day experience, with the presence of familiar faces providing comfort, facilitating trust and enabling positive and negative behavioural tendencies, it also led to clustering in the incidence of death, capture and desertion. Secondly, the dispersal of Scots throughout the International Brigade, a tendency heightened by the lack of an official Scottish unit, meant that networks evolved or were adapted to enable Scots to stay in touch. While wartime correspondence is often envisaged as a two-way dialogue between home and front, this study highlights the importance of lateral connections. With no established bureaucracy, unreliable mail services and strict censorship, cultures of gossip developed in both Spain and Britain in order to deal with the scarcity of information. Once established, these communication networks served ancillary functions, such as political observation and control as well as informal backchannels for feedback and evaluation within the Communist Party hierarchy.

⁸ Helen McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge, 2005), 57–117.

⁹ Alexander Watson, 'Culture and Combat in the Western World, 1900-1945', *The Historical Journal* 51:2 (2008), 529–46.

Clusters

On 5 February 1938, Dan Burns departed Britain for Spain.¹⁰ He did not travel alone – with him were six other Scots, three of whom he knew from his hometown of Greenock: Michael Clarke, Harry Blackley and William McLennan. Clarke was a friend of his through the NUWM, while Burns, McLennan and Blackley were members of the same Communist Party branch.¹¹ George Jackson, John MacPherson and William Campbell, three miners from in and around Cowdenbeath, made up the septet.¹² Theirs was not to be a quiet or easy time in Spain. That summer, one would be killed, three captured and two others wounded, one of whom then deserted.¹³ Only one, John MacPherson, left Spain relatively unscathed.

What their case tells us about the volunteering experience is that there were continuities, from life at home, to the front line and beyond. That three of seven volunteers who had left together were captured on the same day is highly suggestive that they did not just travel together to Spain, but that they also trained, fought and were taken prisoner together. This was in fact the typical experience for Scottish volunteers: they departed together with friends and acquaintances, formed further bonds based on shared identities on the journey and during training, a process which Scottishness – shared backgrounds, acquaintances, cultures and accents – facilitated, and these connections then formed the basis for the smaller subunits of the British Battalion.

That these groupings could form at all is due to the nature of the International Brigades themselves. As Remi Skoutelsky has demonstrated, the endeavour was organised on the spot, hastily and with little expertise.¹⁴ Bureaucracy and procedures were created as needed, where needed. As such, the allocation of

¹⁰ 'List of persons who fought in Spain, 1936–1939', TNA, KV 5/112.

¹¹ 'Burns and Clarke in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 157, 167.

¹² '14th Feb. Transport', 14 February 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/91/156–7.

¹³ See Appendix A.

¹⁴ Remi Skoutelsky, *Novedad en el frente* (Madrid, 2006), 71–84.

volunteers into smaller units usually followed the path of least resistance and kept existing groups together. Even at higher levels, there was flexibility, as demonstrated by the Irish volunteers, who collectively decided to switch battalions twice during the war.¹⁵ This was not a pattern limited to the British. Cecil Eby observed the formation of an entire company based on shared occupational identity.¹⁶ This scope to choose one's own immediate comrades, combined with recruitment conducted with precision among relatively small communities, opened the door for the grouping of volunteers along lines based on their own preferences, which naturally were channelled towards serving with those whom they already shared mutual acquaintance, trust and shared identities.

Other volunteers' recollections suggest that Burns' experience of leaving Scotland with friends, acquaintances and other Scots was the norm. David Anderson recalled that

There were five of us altogether that left Aberdeen for Spain on the 12th of February 1937. One lad, John Flett from Park Street in Aberdeen, was older than we were. He would be about 45. Three of us were members of the Communist Party: Alex Gibb, Archie Dewar and myself, but the other two weren't members of any particular party.¹⁷

Anderson's Aberdonians were soon absorbed into a larger group, with at least eleven other Scots noted to be in the same party sailing to Calais. Volunteers departing together in small clusters before joining larger Scottish groupings was a common experience. Donald Renton described a similar process, with shared local and regional identity bound this group of volunteers for their journey, even with an unusually heterogeneous mix of Party affiliations.

Among the men who left Edinburgh in November 1936 there was my very, very good friend George Watters and a number of others: Harry Fry, who was destined to become one of the commanders of the British Battalion of the International Brigades; George Bridges, who was killed

¹⁵ Robert Stradling, *The Irish in the Spanish Civil War* (Manchester, 1999), 155–62; James Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire* (Stanford, 1998), 173–6.

¹⁶ Eby, *Comrades and Commissars*, 30.

¹⁷ Anderson in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 89.

at Jarama, who was not a member of the Communist Party but of the British Section of the International Socialist Labour Party; and a lad called Forrester, who also was a member.¹⁸

Anderson and Renton were part of the flood of volunteers that left Britain in the winter of 1936-37.¹⁹ As such, groups could be defined by precise point of origin, with those from the Aberdeen or Edinburgh districts travelling within a larger Scottish contingent. Later, as the number of volunteers dwindled and departures grew less frequent, such specific local clusters were less common. However, the evidence suggests that Scots usually still travelled together, as recounted in a letter describing Tom Murray's journey in April 1938.

There are thirty-five leaving Paris tonight including 11 Scots. Birt Smith of Kirkcaldy and I have been appointed Group Leaders + he has five Scots + I six Scots to pilot over the frontier. In my lot are two youths from Glasgow, the two Dundee fellows who offered their services when I was there and an Aberdeen fellow.²⁰

Other volunteers provided less detail about their travel arrangements, but made it clear that they travelled to Spain accompanied by other Scots. Fife volunteer Tommy Bloomfield journeyed with a Glaswegian who 'got us out of difficulties when we were passing through southern France because he spoke Esperanto.'²¹ Tom Clarke recalled leaving Dundee with two other local volunteers.²² Eddie Brown, living at the time in Perthshire, remembered that he went 'to Glasgow and said I wanted to volunteer... There was a group o' people with us, in fact I was along wi' an Aberdeen fellow, John Londragan.'²³ Of 482 volunteers for whom details are available, over 400 travelled alongside other Scots.²⁴

Although it is natural that geography formed the basis for the groups of volunteers that travelled to Spain, it is less obvious that these associations

¹⁸ 'British Section of the International Socialist Labour Party', and Renton in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 21.

¹⁹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 11.

²⁰ Tom to Janet Murray, 4 April 1938, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 1.

²¹ Bloomfield in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 52.

²² Clarke in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 57.

²³ Brown in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 108.

²⁴ This is likely an underestimate as different sources recorded different dates, most often either departure from Britain (Security Service surveillance) and arrival in Spain (Battalion records). TNA, KV 5/112-31; RGASPI, 545/6/91.

mattered in Spain. Yet evidence suggests they did. Steve Fullarton, for instance, implied that it was actually unusual for one's immediate companions not to be those you arrived with, as well as confirming that the majority of these were fellow Scots.

I was associating with Dusty Miller from Alexandria, Benny Richardson from North of England, Jimmy Glavin from Glasgow, who hadn't been in the same gang as me going out, and another man – I think he was from Dundee.²⁵

Making the journey to Spain together was not the only way in which shared identity bound Scottish volunteers together once in Spain. Volunteers could actively seek out those with whom they shared personal or local bonds after arriving. Alec Park arrived in Spain on 12 January 1938 with a large group of Scots, including six fellow Glaswegians who, like Park, hailed from Glasgow's East End.²⁶ Park wrote several times to his wife upon arriving, reassuring her that he was 'in a British Company and [Tom McWhirter] is my section leader further all of us who left together are in the same company' and that he enjoyed 'the comradeship of most of our Glasgow Group.'²⁷ In Park's case, there was clear synergy at work. He departed with several local comrades, who were immediately welcomed into a pre-existing 'section' made up of individuals they knew from home. Park's comments about the existence of a 'Glasgow Group' are echoed in a different context in Rob Stradling's work, where he discusses Tony Hyndman's experience of a mob of Glaswegians' 'drunken loutishness', supposedly targeting his effeminacy.²⁸ As well as perhaps reinforcing stereotypes of Glaswegian masculine identity, this incident serves to confirm Park's experience of Glaswegians sticking together in Spain, for better or worse.

The limitations of the British Battalion records hampers sweeping conclusions regarding the composition of smaller units. However, there was one 'official' subunit where it is possible to see these trends in practice. In May 1937, a

²⁵ Fullarton in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 294.

²⁶ 'Entradas de voluntarios del día 12 de enero 1938', RGASPI, 545/6/36/15–16.

²⁷ Alec to Annie Park, 20 February 1938 and 21 February 1938, MML, Box A-12, File Pa/10-11.

²⁸ Robert Stradling, *History and Legend: Writing the International Brigades* (Cardiff, 2003), 28.

British Anti-Tank (AT) Battery was created. Commanded by the enigmatic Malcolm Dunbar, the AT battery was dominated by Scottish volunteers. Eddie Brown, an early recruit, remembered half the unit being Scots when it was formed, chiefly from the east of Scotland.²⁹ A snapshot of unit personnel from February 1938 reveals that although the number of Scots had thinned, their early dominance had cemented their position in the unit hierarchy, with Scots making up three out of five non-commissioned officers, the Political Commissar (and acting commander), as well as the clerk and quartermaster.³⁰

Brown was not the only Scot in the AT battery who gave testimony: George Murray, John Dunlop, Hugh Sloan, John Londragan and Bill Cranston were also interviewed by Ian MacDougall, while Arthur Nicoll's recollections were preserved by the Imperial War Museum. Their complementary descriptions of their journeys to Spain and the formation of the unit confirm that the process was similar to that hypothesised above. Londragan noted that the unit was formed almost exclusively from the group of sixteen that he arrived with, which included several smaller clusters of Scots.³¹ As with those discussed above, these travelling groups of Scots were characterised by pre-existing personal, political and geographic connections. One group contained Londragan, Brown, Dunlop and Murray.³² Within this group, Dunlop and Murray were members of the same Communist Party branch, Murray and Brown were old friends from Perth, while Londragan met Dunlop en route to Spain, if not before.³³ Another group led by Dundonian Arthur Nicoll featured similar patterns of political and personal acquaintance. Nicoll knew Hugh Sloan through the NUWM, while Sloan himself knew Kirkcaldy volunteer Fraser Crombie from protests against the Means Test.³⁴ Personal connections also played a role in selecting newcomers to the unit. Arthur Nicoll was able to get his brother Peter assigned 'in my own unit'

²⁹ Brown in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 112.

³⁰ 'AT Battery', AGGCE, PS-Aragon, Box 6, File 13, Doc. 17.

³¹ Londragan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 172, 174.

³² Brown and Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 108, 118.

³³ Dunlop and Londragan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 118, 171.

³⁴ Sloan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 197, 205; Nicoll, TLS, MS, Tape 956.

to 'keep him in sight' when he arrived in October 1937.³⁵ Like Alec Park above, this suggests that for volunteers with the right connections, there was a degree of choice involved in assignment. The natural choice was to serve alongside friends and family.

If Scots tended to serve together in small groupings, there are several outcomes that might be expected. The first is that losses would not be spread evenly, as groups who ended up in particularly dangerous situations would be expected to suffer higher casualties. It is not coincidental that so many Scots who served on the AT battery survived – they served in a long-range support role back from the front line, which carried with it a reduced risk. This was apparent to the volunteers themselves; Bill Cranston noted that 'only two or three of our crowd' were killed.³⁶ Other cases provide an opposite story. The group of Edinburgh volunteers containing Donald Renton and George Watters found themselves in a difficult situation during the Battle of Jarama. Serving together in the Machine Gun Company, they found themselves out of position and surrounded. The survivors' accounts make it clear that the group that had travelled together remained largely intact going into action, and that they shared in the trauma to come.

Our Company at the beginning of that encirclement probably had around 120 men. When we finally were in Fascist hands there were only some thirty of us left, the bulk of whom in one way or another had been knocked about rather badly. I'd been wounded in the legs, Harry Fry had a broken arm, shattered with machine gun bullets, Jimmy Rutherford was battered soft, George Watters had gone down.³⁷

Watters recalled the death of his friend in the same action.

My mate from Prestonpans he was badly wounded just the day before we were surrounded and I advised him to wait on them comin' up wi' the ambulance men that would take him down on stretchers. But he felt the stretchers were needed for men that were more severely wounded than he was. He didn't realise how bad he was and unfortunately he died.³⁸

³⁵ Nicoll, Tape 956.

³⁶ Cranston in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 189.

³⁷ Renton in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 25–6.

³⁸ Watters in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 36.

Similarly, Donald Renton remembered the 'bad' death of another Edinburgh volunteer in this action, Robert Mason, who succumbed to severe burns.³⁹ Of the volunteers who left Edinburgh in December 1936, five perished at Jarama and five more were captured together. Only one Edinburgh volunteer served in the battle without being captured, wounded or both.⁴⁰ Their accounts indicate that this high toll among a specific geographical subset of volunteers was due to the majority of Edinburgh volunteers serving together in one of the most dangerous areas of the battle. Other instances, such as that of one shell killing three volunteers from eastern Scotland, add weight to the conclusion that thanks to the tendency for volunteers from the same area to stick together, exposure to danger often had some relationship to regional and local origins.⁴¹

Although first-hand accounts are not available for many such incidents, it is possible to obtain a broad picture of whether origins affected how likely volunteers were to be killed. Using the data presented in Richard Baxell's work on British volunteer origins, combined with the official 'Roll of Honour' of volunteers maintained by the IBMT, Table 3.1 shows a Britain-wide picture. These figures indicate that while Britons in Spain suffered a high rate of fatalities – although slightly lower than the 25 percent calculated by Skoutelsky for all internationals – different regions show distinct variation.⁴² However, these figures are not entirely satisfactory, as Baxell provides rough estimates of each region's proportion of the total rather than precise numbers, and his underlying methodology is not discussed.⁴³ Even so, the marked differences between regions indicates some connection between origins and casualties.

³⁹ Renton in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 26.

⁴⁰ The other surviving Edinburgher, Charles O'Neill, had travelled to Spain earlier as part of a Glaswegian group. 'Biografia de Militantes: Charles O'Neill', RGASPI, 545/6/181/65.

⁴¹ These were George Jackson (Cowdenbeath), Malcolm Smith (Dundee) and Charlie McLeod (Aberdeen). Tom Murray to McLeod, 23 October 1938, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 6.

⁴² Skoutelsky, *Novedad*, 394.

⁴³ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 18–19.

Region	Number of volunteers	Total killed	Percentage killed
London and South East	775	154	19.8%
Scotland	525	131.5	25%
North-West	375	68	18.1%
North-East	200	23	11.5%
Wales	150	28.5	19%
South-West	50	10	20%
Midlands	75	19.5	26%
Northern Ireland	50	13	26%
Ireland and Empire	225	39.5	17.5%
Other	25	8.5	34%
Total	2450	495.5	20.2%

Table 3.1: Approximate totals of volunteers and deaths by region.⁴⁴

However, if the thesis presented here is correct – namely, that local as much as national factors fuelled recruitment – then similar variation should be present within Scotland. Based on independent calculations, it is possible to paint a general picture of variation in the Scottish volunteering experience.

Locale	Total volunteers	Dead (prop.)	Prisoners of war (prop.)	Deserters (prop.)
Glasgow	199	60 (30.2%)	20 (10.1%)	33 (16.6%)
Edinburgh	48	7 (14.6%)	9 (18.8%)	5 (10.4%)
Dundee	57	15 (26.3%)	4 (7.0%)	9 (15.8%)
Aberdeen	23	5 (21.7%)	2 (8.7%)	3 (13.0%)
Airdrie	10	2 (20.0%)	1 (10.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Alexandria	13	4 (30.8%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)
Clydebank	11	3 (27.3%)	2 (18.2%)	2 (18.2%)
Greenock	17	4 (23.5%)	4 (23.5%)	3 (17.6%)
Kirkcaldy	12	3 (25.0%)	1 (8.7%)	2 (16.7%)
Cambuslang	7	0	1 (14.2%)	2 (28.5%)
Paisley	8	1 (12.5%)	2 (25.0%)	2 (25.0%)
Bellshill	8	4 (50.0%)	0	1 (12.5%)
Blantyre	5	3 (60.0%)	1 (20.0%)	0
Scotland	520	129 (24.8%)	58 (11.1%)	96 (18.5%)

Table 3.2: Numbers of dead, prisoners of war and deserters by locale in Scotland.⁴⁵

Significant variation is again apparent. This suggests that the impact of origins worked on two levels. There was a wider, regional trend of Scottish volunteers

⁴⁴ Fractions are given when volunteers where there was uncertainty, such as Richard Lomax, who was listed as 'Glasgow/Shrewsbury'. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 19; IMBT Roll of Honour.

⁴⁵ These outcomes were not mutually exclusive. A volunteer might desert, be caught, sent back to the front and then killed. Likewise, several volunteers were executed while prisoners.

having higher mortality rates than their English and Welsh counterparts. This is not incompatible with the thesis presented here – it has been seen in numerous accounts above that Scots were often initially grouped together. It is plausible that perceived common ground as Scots, not to mention the initial experiences of travelling to Spain together, led to friendships and clusters forming more easily among Scots even without specific local connections. Furthermore, as shown in Chapter Two, recruitment networks often transcended individual locales, usually through internal migration or political activity. However, as seen in the latter table and numerous other examples given above, locality remained an important factor. The variation shown not just between large cities but also between the smaller clusters of volunteers, suggests that locality continued to be important alongside any overarching Scotland-wide impact. What both trends confirm is that beyond the impact of previous acquaintance in terms of day-to-day life, as Helen McCartney does in the context of the First World War, there were also concrete effects on the volunteering experience.⁴⁶

The relatively small groups of volunteers from certain locales present an interpretive challenge. Their numbers were small enough that figures can be easily skewed, limiting their comparative usefulness. However, if location and the associated personal connections did contribute to volunteer outcomes, the extent to which even small groups often featured a commonality of experience is telling. That Blantyre and Bellshill volunteers were so likely to die is not statistically significant, but in the context of this argument, it is nonetheless suggestive, as is the fact that places like Cambuslang and Paisley escaped relatively unscathed. Figures on prisoners of war and desertions are similarly suggestive. Even on the smallest scale, such patterns remain visible: each of the three volunteers who gave their address as 106 Parliamentary Road, Glasgow deserted following the Battle of Jarama.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, 52.

⁴⁷ CASEY Francis and PATERSON Puller, RGASPI, 545/6/113/137; 545/6/183/94. For Casey and Rush, see correspondence between Valencia and Madrid Consulates, April-May 1937, TNA, FO 889/2/40,109–11.

While such examples cannot be considered as statistical proof of the thesis presented here, they are nonetheless suggestive of some link between origins and propensity to desert. This is reflected in desertion narratives – it was often not a solitary act, with deserters frequently leaving in pairs or small groups. In such circumstances, personal trust was vital in order to safely communicate mutual unhappiness with the situation. Knowing one another prior to volunteering is an obvious way in which such trust might have been fostered. For one such pair of deserters from Uddingston, it is likely that the desertions were mutually planned and executed, with both deserting in late April 1937, caught in Alicante, and then sent to work in the Albacete Auto Park.⁴⁸ Furthermore, serving directly alongside each other meant that volunteers with existing ties had similar levels of exposure to stressful combat, shell shock or living conditions. A report on the desertion of James Donald and Malcolm Sneddon, both from Methil, Fife, provides one such example.

They complained of frightful disorganisation in their battalion, the quartermaster running away with their money and no proper command in battle. Once 9 (!) men were sent out to follow up a tank, but the tank got frightened and turned back leaving the men in front of it. Most of them were killed. Donald and Sneddon just walked away after that, one can't really blame them.⁴⁹

Aside from confirming again the continuities of service in Spain – Sneddon and Donald volunteered together, journeyed together, fought together and deserted together – this case shows desertion as a collective decision, shaped by shared origin and shared exposure to traumatic experiences.

Point of origin was not the only factor that influenced a volunteers' fate in Spain. Chronology played a role in determining the likelihood of death or captivity. Volunteers who arrived in time to fight in certain bloody battles – and, crucially, too late for adequate training beforehand – were more likely to die or have other negative outcomes. Over three quarters of Scots who arrived in November and December of 1937, for example, were killed, captured or deserted,

⁴⁸ See RGASPI, 545/6/145/6–11; 545/6/193/65–7.

⁴⁹ H.O. Knester, 'Report on deserters, Donald and Sneddon', 9 May 1937, MML, Box 39, File A/9.

compared to just 30 percent of those who arrived six months earlier. It must be allowed, however, that there was interplay between chronological, national and local factors. In November 1937 Alexander Elder, Charles Scott, John Crate and Alistair McDonald were apprehended after deserting and stowing away on a ship bound for Gibraltar.⁵⁰ There is no evidence they knew each other prior to leaving Scotland, being from Leith, Glasgow, New Cumnock and Kirkcaldy respectively. It is likely that Elder, Scott and McDonald met on the journey to Spain, with Crate arriving two weeks later.⁵¹ They apparently continued to serve in close proximity to one another before reaching a collective decision to desert in early November. In such cases, chronology cannot be readily separated from origin – it is natural that groups of friends from the same place would tend to volunteer together when possible, and even for those without direct connections, the shared journey to Spain alongside other Scots could still shape the development of subunits.

Local or national identities were not the only ways volunteers could make connections in Spain. The vast majority of Scots were working class, which doubtless helped keep them clustered together. Unlike the Americans or Welsh, however, occupational ties proved less important, likely because, as discussed in Chapter One, the trade union movement was never an effective forum for recruitment. Several Scots, notably Wilfred Macartney, came from more privileged backgrounds, which could distance them from other volunteers. Macartney was sent home after commanding the battalion during its initial training period, with Communist Party officials judging him unsuitable, not least due to the gulf between Macartney and the volunteers.⁵² The testimony of middle-class volunteers indicates that while they retained many connections to Scots in the International Brigades, they were more adventurous in seeking out new acquaintances. John Dunlop, for instance, recalled a much wider circle of associates in the International Brigades than many of his working-class

⁵⁰ El Ministerio de Defensa Nacional to the Comandante de la XV Brigada, 21 November 1937, AGGCE, PS-Aragon, Box 6, File 11, Doc. 3.

⁵¹ 'Battalion Enrolment List', RGASPI, 545/6/91/120-2.

⁵² Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 168–71; Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 67.

comrades. As well as mentioning several 'English chaps' he got on well with, Dunlop also frequently chose to eat with the 'Spanish group' of his unit.⁵³ Working-class Scots also made friends based on other shared connections. Tom Clarke, for instance, recalled that he 'pal-ed up' with Liverpudlian Alex Alexander, apparently based on a mutual appreciation for Spanish wine, which unsurprisingly landed them both in some trouble.⁵⁴

Scottish identities need to be appreciated as one factor among several that shaped the way Scots made connections in the International Brigades, albeit an important one. While these connections clearly influenced volunteers' immediate companions within the Battalion, the chaotic nature of the conflict and lack of a dedicated Scottish unit meant that it was unlikely for any given volunteer to have immediate companionship with all of their friends or family. Hospitalisation, promotion, reassignment and repatriation helped scatter volunteers further. A realistic conclusion is that while Scots were usually able to serve alongside some acquaintances, it was just as common for Scots to have pre-existing contacts serving in different units. With the dispersal of volunteers throughout the Republican zone, strategies beyond clustering together were necessary to keep track of friends and family in Spain.

Correspondence

The scholarly use of soldiers' wartime letters has progressed beyond their portrayal of day-to-day life, with recent work examining the self-images soldiers wished to portray to their loved ones, the methods and means of communication between the front and home in wartime and how this shaped perceptions of the conflict at home.⁵⁵ The letters written by Scottish volunteers

⁵³ Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices From the Spanish Civil War*, 131–2.

⁵⁴ Clarke in MacDougall, *Voices From the Spanish Civil War*, 60–1.

⁵⁵ For a small yet diverse sample of methods and focus, see Santanu Das, 'Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe, 1914–18: Archive, Language, and Feeling', *Twentieth Century British History* 25:3 (2014), 397–405; Kate Hunter, 'More than an Archive of War: Intimacy and Manliness in the Letters of a Great War Soldier to the Woman He Loved, 1915–1919', *Gender &*

in Spain offer similar insight, and if anything their importance was heightened by the special nature of the conflict. Normal wartime communication difficulties were compounded by the poor state of communication channels between Spain and Britain. The lack of an official, well-resourced bureaucracy to manage information, the censorship of letters, the unreliability of the Spanish postal system and the rarity of leave all impeded the flow of information.

Communication strategies evolved to cope with this, meaning that rather than a two-way line of communication between war zone and homeland, exchanges of information took place laterally within Spain and Scotland. This correspondence between Scots in Spain traces lines of communication that stretched across the conflict zone and Britain, forming networks that complemented the Scottish clusters discussed above. As with these groupings, such connections may have been particularly dense among Scottish volunteers due to the depth and breadth of previous acquaintance, but were likely present among other national groups.

Scholarly literature on soldiers' wartime letters highlights their ambiguity as a source into individuals' thoughts and feelings. Letters must be understood as performative, projecting a desired self-image to its audience.⁵⁶ As seen in Chapter Two, this has particular pitfalls when considering letters as evidence of motivation and ideological commitment – just as First World War letters attempted to convey the image of the dutiful, patriotic and carefree warrior to those at home, so too did volunteers in Spain attempt to convey the ideological purity of both their cause and themselves. In this context, however, it is the nature of the audiences that these performances were designed to reach that provide insight. The public nature of these letters, read not just by the recipient and the censor but a wide audience of acquaintances at home – in some cases even intended for public use as propaganda – is part of their very fabric. The

History, 25:2 (2013), 339–52; Michael Finn, 'Local heroes: war news and the construction of 'community' in Britain, 1914–18', *Historical Research* 83:221 (2010), 524–35.

⁵⁶ E.g. Bruno Cabanes, 'Negotiating Intimacy In The Shadow Of War (France, 1914–1920s): New Perspectives in the Cultural History of World War I', *French Politics, Society & Culture* 31:1 (2013), 8–11.

intended and actual uses of volunteers' letters therefore reflect the needs of communication, patronage and political manoeuvring.

What is striking about volunteers' letters is the extent that they were given over to gossip. Pages were filled with news of injuries, deaths and captives, changed addresses, chance encounters and visits to mutual friends and family. Rather than simply idle chatter, it is argued that this gossip fulfilled an important function in the absence of reliable lines of communication. Information was often not personalised; it was passed on from a wide circle of acquaintance on both ends, in the knowledge that of several letters sent, only one might arrive in good time, or at all. These connections served purposes beyond the sharing of vital personal information. For senior communists, who often had the best-developed networks, this correspondence served as an informal backchannel for advice, feedback and political direction. Scottish networks also offered a means of surveillance both within and without Spain, allowing for individuals' morale to be monitored and manipulated, the identification of and coordination against dissenting voices and effective promotion of the International Brigades at home.

This passage, written by William McGregor of Maryhill, Glasgow, is typical of many such letters:

Regarding Jimmy Riddel, I have no personal effects belonging to him, he went from my section to the [unclear] on the 9th July, during the Brunete offensive, about the 12th or 13th July they were bringing food up in the *camion* when they were strafed by a plane, Cde Woodhouse was killed, Jimmy was wounded, he got better of the wound but died of some internal trouble in Murcia, Cde John Angus, who is with me just now was there wounded and has given me the information. Tell Mrs Riddel her son was a brave anti-fascist fighter both at Jarama and Brunete. At Jarama Johnny and I went over together and lay behind the same olive tree. I wrote Aitken a few days ago. I have seen Bob Middleton who is with Battalion just now, Bobby Ball is training here. You have to find out if Johnny Young's wife is writing, he has had no word from home for some time, he is in the Maryhill local.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ McGregor to Kerrigan, 19 November 1937, MML, Box 50, File McG/1.

McGregor's letter blends news from the front and rear with messages for friends and family, from both himself and others. Aside from exchanging details unavailable through official channels, such as the circumstances of Riddel's death, McGregor also makes it clear which friends he has seen lately, where they are and what support they needed. The recipient of the letter was not the final destination, rather they acted as a node through which information can be distributed further, just as the writer has collected information from those around him. McGregor's network was particularly well preserved. Its members were Glaswegian Communist Party activists who occupied key roles within the English-speaking units, with Peter Kerrigan, Scottish District Leader and sometime CPGB representative in Spain, at its centre.⁵⁸ Others, such as Thomas McWhirter, were junior officers, while Alec Donaldson was in charge of propaganda for the British contingent.⁵⁹ Thanks to their standing among Glaswegian Party members, their dispersal throughout Spain and their positions, information about individual Scots, especially Glaswegians, could constantly be gathered and exchanged. Donaldson was explicit in regarding Scottishness as the key connection, making 'a point in getting in touch with the Scots lads' in his vicinity.⁶⁰ They often demonstrated a paternal outlook for the Scottish volunteers in Spain, keeping track of their progress and well-being. McWhirter kept a special eye on those from his district, Govan.

Bobby Shields is in hospital at present, a slight chill of the usual acclimatising nature, the four Govan boys are settling down. I'll keep my eye on big H—R, he is doing ok so far.⁶¹

The reliance on gossip even among high-ranking, well-informed members of the Communist Party is indicative of just how reliant all volunteers were on these informal networks for basic information. Often, this was the only way for those at home or in Spain to hear of casualties among friends.

⁵⁸ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 10.

⁵⁹ McWhirter to Kerrigan, 2 November 1937, MML, Box 50, File McW/1; 'DONALDSON Alec', RGASPI, 545/6/125/61.

⁶⁰ Donaldson to Kerrigan, 2 October 37, MML, Box 50, File Dn/6.

⁶¹ McWhirter to Kerrigan, 16 February 1938, MML, Box 50, File McW/12.

I was sorry to hear about Ralph Forrester and really surprised that such an apparently physically strong comrade should die like that. I can remember him very well in the Calton district when he really had a unique standing among the warring religious factions. I will let the Glasgow comrades know about his death.⁶²

Here, the network served to inform Donaldson of the death of a colleague, and allowed him to transmit this information locally among other 'Glasgow comrades' who had also known Forrester. This particular episode highlights the extent to which these networks complemented the existence of smaller groups of Scots within the International Brigades, with exchanges of information taking place both within and between such groups. Networks were both horizontal and vertical; information passed down the line through Communist Party leaders like Donaldson could be disseminated widely through the ranks. For those without such networks, news was often slow and unreliable. The wife of Glaswegian Alex Harvey, for instance, heard nothing for nearly six months after his death at Jarama.⁶³ As a non-Communist in Spain for less than a month, Harvey lacked connections with other Glasgow volunteers. Without anyone to notice or communicate news of his death, his wife was left completely uninformed.

It was not just bad news that was shared. The discovery that Clydebank volunteer Robert Beggs was alive and in a Nationalist prison camp spread quickly among the Glasgow network.

We have just received word from Spain from Bobby Beggs that he is alive. He is a prisoner of Franco and this apparently is the first letter he has been able to get through from the time he was captured at Brunete.⁶⁴

In a further show of interconnection, it was Donaldson, not the recipient of the letter William McAulay, who replied to Kerrigan.

A couple of days before your letter arrived McWhirter and myself were discussing Beggs and it was suggested that there was still a possibility of him being alive. I am glad that this is so because he was a good steady

⁶² Donaldson to Kerrigan, 15 February 1938, MML, Box 50, File Dn/5.

⁶³ Robson to Paynter, 16 July 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/51/10.

⁶⁴ Kerrigan to McAulay, 29 January 1938, MML, Box 50, File McA/2.

comrade here and now that his capture has been established it ought to be possible to get his release.⁶⁵

The movement of individuals between front, rear and home also played an important role in keeping networks informed.⁶⁶ Thanks to censorship and occasional need for delicacy, visits in person could be considerably more candid and informative. Writing to a fellow Blairgowrie communist, William Gilmour made clear the limits of communicating by letter.

There are many things to tell you, things which it would never do to write upon, things that are only meant for the private conversation, and observance of two class conscious individuals, and I will if I ever reach home endeavor [sic] to enlighten you on some of the subjects, many of which have pleased, and others which have troubled me.⁶⁷

The development of communication channels was not limited to Glasgow and its dense concentration of Communist Party membership and activity. Similar networks formed among volunteers from other parts of Scotland. The Murray family, with three members in Spain and others active in solidarity movements at home, provides an excellent example of how these networks worked. Thanks both to their standing in the Party – they came from a good ‘CP family’ – and their migration throughout Scotland during the 1930s, the Murrays formed the backbone of a diverse network connecting Spain and Scotland.⁶⁸ Annie Murray, in Spain as a nurse, often relied on information from Scotland to keep abreast of events in Spain.

I am sorry to hear that Bridges and Mason were killed. I did not know that either was out. Is it little Mason of the party? I hope not he was such a good lad and such a hard worker. I am also very sorry about Donald Renton’s plight. Tell their people in Edinburgh that I send my sincerest sympathy.⁶⁹

Similar information was communicated among Murray siblings spread throughout eastern Scotland.

⁶⁵ Donaldson to Kerrigan, 15 February 1938. See also McWhirter to Kerrigan, 16 February 1938.

⁶⁶ E.g. Kerrigan to McGregor, 1 December 1937, MML, Box 50, File McG/2.

⁶⁷ Gilmour to Paterson, 17 August 1937, MML, Box 50, File Gl/30.

⁶⁸ ‘Summary and critical survey of my work in Spain’, September 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/88/11.

⁶⁹ Annie to Tom Murray, 16 April 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 3.

The Moirs have at last heard from Jim who is safely in Spain and has met George and Eddie. Jim's mother and father were overjoyed to get word from him. Mrs Brown has also heard from Eddie who is feeling better and he mentions that George has not yet received one letter from any of us.⁷⁰

Jimmy Moir's story is a tragic demonstration of the utility of such networks. He remained an active part of the network up to July 1937.⁷¹ However, Moir went missing during the Battle of Brunete, with Annie informing her family that while there was no 'definite word' yet, she was 'afraid he is lost forever.'⁷² It was another month until the 'official' channels caught up.

We heard officially that Jim Moir was lost on the 23rd of July when a big offensive was on and the members of the Brigade were asked to retreat... they hold out really no hope of Jim's being alive – except on the very, very frail chance of his being a prisoner.⁷³

Correspondence concerning Moir highlights not just the way that news of individuals could be tracked and communicated using unofficial networks, but also the extent that these networks operated considerably more efficiently than official channels. However, this was not their sole function. While the availability of timely and detailed information was no doubt important, for the Communist Party figures at their centre they offered other benefits. This is hinted at in further discussion regarding Moir's death.

I am glad Jimmy's people have reacted the way they have. Do you ever see his sister now? When I was in hospital I opened a letter addressed to Jimmy to see if the writer had any news of him. It was from his mother who was, she said, 'perplexed and hurt' that he should have been leading a life of which she knew nothing and that he had gone away to fight in a war which could have nothing to do with him! She seems to have a very limited vision.⁷⁴

Any signs of wavering from Moir's parents were cause for significant apprehension, as the families of dead volunteers could be sources of damaging publicity for the International Brigades in Britain. George Murray's concern was

⁷⁰ Lily to Agnes Murray, 19 June 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 5.

⁷¹ Moir to Lily Murray, 6 July 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 6.

⁷² Annie Murray, 18 September 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 3.

⁷³ Lily to Tom Murray, 12 October 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 5.

⁷⁴ George to Lily Murray, 28 December 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 4.

more explicit in another letter urging his brother to arrange a visit to Moir's family.⁷⁵ This intervention was part of a wider effort to monitor and influence the morale of volunteers and their families. The case of Eddie Brown, a friend of the Murrays who had travelled and fought alongside George, is particularly revealing. In late 1937, while Brown was hospitalised due to wounds, the Murrays learned that Brown's wife, pregnant with the child of a fellow Perth Communist, had eloped to London.⁷⁶ Several weeks of frantic communication across Spain and Scotland, discussing the crisis behind Brown's back. Annie Murray wrote to her brother in Scotland that

[Eddie Brown] has not heard anything from his wife and I have told him nothing. He seems quite happy and resigned to his 'letterless fate'. I expect that he has his sleepless nights of worry but he seems much less worried.⁷⁷

Even by mid-January 1938, the Murrays were still concealing the news from Brown.⁷⁸ The deliberateness of this approach is suggested by Brown's evaluation, which highlighted mental health concerns, labelling him as 'hypochondriacal [sic].'⁷⁹ Previous bouts of low morale are also alluded to in previous letters.⁸⁰ Viewed charitably, the incident reflects the qualitative difference of serving alongside friends and family, who could not just provide a support network but had intimate knowledge of their comrades' situation and needs. Viewed cynically, however, the Murray network was being used to control the flow of personal information in order to manage an individual's morale for the good of the Party.

Other cases show more clearly the subordination of Scottish networks to Communist Party needs. Networks were used to monitor repatriated volunteers, informing Party members in Scotland of potential issues and developing

⁷⁵ George to Tom and Janet Murray, 21 November 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 4.

⁷⁶ 'Davie', quoted in Lily to Tom Murray, nd, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 5.

⁷⁷ Annie to Tom Murray, 28 December 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 3.

⁷⁸ Annie to Lily Murray, 8 January 1938, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 3.

⁷⁹ 'Edward Brown – Evaluation', RGASPI, 545/6/111/56.

⁸⁰ Annie to Tom Murray, 8 August 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 3.

strategies to deal with troublemakers. After Tom Murray left for Spain in April 1938, his wife Janet wrote regarding two returned volunteers.

I also want [Smith] to see Fred to refute if necessary any stories that Gembles might be spreading about things that might give a wrong impression. Smith's story and his do not tally and his stories about superior food the officers are getting (all lies I know) could cause a lot of harm.⁸¹

Thomas Gembles was a 19 year-old who had been repatriated following a truck accident, which had left him half-blinded 'with the mentality of a boy of 13.'⁸²

The use of Scottish networks to monitor such dangerous sources of dissent from the 'official' line was not limited to the Murray clan. William Gilmour wrote home about several former comrades who had escaped Spain in April 1937.

The names of the "deserters with the yellow streak" were McDonald of Kirkcaldy, Craig of Glasgow and Parker of Dundee, I believe you would do something to expose the Parker renegade as I believe he was an erstwhile member of the CP. They were all yellow. They ran away while the fight was at its worst. There is some excuse for men whose nerves go under the strain. But there is no punishment severe enough for men who desert their comrades in the thick of the fight, and then go home to Britain pertaining to be the bearers of a petition bearing the names of 32 of our comrades who wanted to go home. These men have deliberately tried to destroy our principles by [missing] lies and the sorry part of it all there are a section of the public will believe it.⁸³

Such efforts complemented broader efforts to control the flow of information to and from Spain. The International Brigade Censorship Section explicitly saw its purpose in such terms, preventing the '*sorti de courrier demoralisant par les volontaires*' as well as the arrival of '*courrier nuisible et destructif au moral des volontaires*.'⁸⁴ Such decisions were often framed in terms of sparing families unpleasant news, such as when Glaswegian James McKissock died in an accident.

⁸¹ Janet to Tom Murray, 25 April 1938, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 2.

⁸² 'Thomas Gembles', RGASPI, 545/6/138/76.

⁸³ Gilmour to Paterson, 5 April 1937, MML, Box 50, File GI/17.

⁸⁴ Trans: 'the sending of demoralising mail by the volunteers' and 'mail that is harmful and destructive to the morale of the volunteers'. 'Rapport par le Chef de la Censure', 17 August 1937, RGASPI, 545/2/158/114.

He fell out of a window and fractured his skull. You had better not let it be known in this way however, as my reports are he was drunk and fell out, hardly inspiring for his relatives, or politically.⁸⁵

It is telling that what was 'best' for the relatives so often coincided with what was best for the political image of the International Brigades. John Dunlop, discussing the execution of a Scottish volunteer, used a similar formulation.

Needless to say this was not reported at home. They were both mentioned as having died in action as it was reported in the *Daily Worker*, which would save their families the shame of knowing.⁸⁶

Morale could also be managed proactively through these networks. After several repatriated Glasgow volunteers allegedly spread 'rumours' in early 1938, Tom McWhirter put together a rejoinder signed by the Glaswegians in his unit, which was duly sent back to help refute negative claims.⁸⁷ In this case, the speed which information could travel along unofficial lines of communication, combined with the large cluster of Glaswegians McWhirter served alongside, enabled an effective response. In other cases, the networks functioned to send appraisals of those around them. Annie Murray, for instance, provided snippets about her co-workers.

Nurse Susan Sutton, Glasgow trained, Violet met her, she came out with me. She speaks Spanish and French well, is a very good nurse has been brought up in very bourgeois circles but is now much improved politically and very popular with everybody and so smart and clever. Then a nurse Mary Slater, very political... She is not a good mixer and is ever so happy on night duty or with someone untrained and really needs a bit of tactful handling but is a good worker too.⁸⁸

Peter Kerrigan's Glasgow network was used for similar ends. Alec Donaldson was particularly forthcoming on such matters, writing to Kerrigan about volunteers such as Andy Anderson, who was 'a very good lad with some

⁸⁵ Tapsell to Pollitt, [April 1937?], MML, Box C, File 13/1.

⁸⁶ Dunlop mistakenly believed that two volunteers were executed rather than one. This case is discussed in Chapter Four. Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 151.

⁸⁷ McWhirter to Kerrigan, n.d., MML, Box 50, File McW/13-16.

⁸⁸ Annie to Lily Murray, 3 April 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 3.

weaknesses', and 'McDougall, McWhirter, O'Connell', who were 'real gems.'⁸⁹ He saved his most fulsome praise for Aberdonian Bob Cooney.

Recently I met Bob Cooney for the first time in my life. He impressed me tremendously and I am of the opinion that he is the best political man out here. He is popular and balanced. I think he shall go to the Brigade and not the Battalion. It is better so because we have too many good comrades as battalion commissars.⁹⁰

Such informal observations underpinned a broader system of evaluations in Spain, a theme returned to in Chapter Four. As Skoutelsky has shown, these evaluations were important in determining individuals' future progression in the Party.⁹¹ In a large, dispersed organisation, those making judgements often relied on their colleagues when evaluating those they did not know directly. A network of peers whose opinion they could rely on was of clear utility – not least because it helped safeguard their own status in the Party.

Networks could also act as an informal backchannel through which advice, concerns and suggestions could be aired without fear. As discussed further in Chapter Four, openly expressing disagreement with Party policy was difficult. In informal and private settings, however, communication tended to be relatively frank.⁹² However, in situations where informal face-to-face meetings were impossible, personal correspondence bridged the gap. A striking element of the correspondence of Kerrigan's network is the familiar and informal tone. It is jarring to read of Kerrigan, the most important Party official in Scotland, referred to as a 'big bear with a sore nut' by McWhirter.⁹³ Alec Donaldson used humour to deflect criticism – when Kerrigan raised concerns about the 'gloomy' tone of his propaganda output, he replied that his 'revolutionary soul was temporarily crushed.'⁹⁴ He could also be brutally honest:

⁸⁹ Donaldson to Kerrigan, 17 January 1938 and 2 October 1937.

⁹⁰ Donaldson to Kerrigan, 4 November 1937, MML, Box 50, File Dn/3.

⁹¹ Skoutelsky, *Novedad*, 328.

⁹² Private openness is apparent in surveillance records, e.g. 'Glasgow Chief Constable's Report', 12 October 1937, TNA, KV 3/391/195.

⁹³ McWhirter to Kerrigan, 9 November 1937, MML, Box 50, File McW/2.

⁹⁴ Donaldson to Kerrigan, 17 January 1938, MML.

[I] was considerably cut up after the Brunete events. The fact that our best comrades went 'down' in that offensive upset me tremendously. That, perhaps, is the best comment on your estimation of my 'cynicism'.⁹⁵

Alongside justifying and defending their actions to their superiors, these mid-ranking Party members also felt comfortable offering criticisms and suggestions themselves. In a letter in February 1938, Donaldson complained about stifling censorship and the poor screening of volunteers, writing that there was not 'good enough control of the type of people being sent', with 'one or two scandalous types who managed to get through.'⁹⁶ McWhirter was even more explicit in his opinions on repatriation of 'useless' volunteers.

The so-named "Repatriates" are on the way back up, definitely a disgrace on political grounds... and I don't believe it is in the best interests of the struggle. Naturally, I have not discussed it except here. I warn you as I am sure it will have repercussions at home, but I suppose your enquiries will be as manifold.⁹⁷

McWhirter's displeasure was abundantly clear, but his lack of opportunity to discuss it openly highlights the importance of correspondence in the absence of trusted colleagues. Donaldson also made delicate political suggestions, notably in the case of Maryhill volunteer Johnny O'Connell. A YCL member and seasoned campaigner in the NUWM, O'Connell had come to Spain in early January 1937 and fought at Jarama.⁹⁸ Due to 'his youthfulness, death of personal friends and disgust at leadership', he deserted at Brunete but was soon caught. Despairing at the loss of his comrades and unable to 'forgive himself' for deserting, O'Connell was demoralised and despondent for months.⁹⁹ Donaldson petitioned Kerrigan to get O'Connell repatriated.

Personally I am worried about Johnny O'Connell and I think you ought to whisper into somebody's ear. Only the mechanical approach to the

⁹⁵ Donaldson to Kerrigan, 2 October 1937, MML.

⁹⁶ Donaldson to Kerrigan, 15 February 1938, MML.

⁹⁷ McWhirter to Kerrigan, 16 February 1938, MML.

⁹⁸ O'CONNELL John, RGASPI, 545/6/180/25-6.

⁹⁹ 'John O'Connell - Evaluation', 19 October 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/180/27.

subject by the person now responsible for this work is holding him back.¹⁰⁰

The leniency shown to O'Connell is striking. He avoided punishment and sent instead to the Battalion kitchen, away from the front.¹⁰¹ Moreover, his Party standing suffered relatively little, likely thanks to his connections. Donaldson himself wrote O'Connell's official evaluation, referring to his desertion in very understanding terms and classing him as 'good.'¹⁰² A second evaluation, written by non-Scottish officials, was harsher, downgrading his rating from 'good' to 'fair' and referring to his personal conduct as 'not satisfactory' – still a lenient evaluation, given that most deserters were classed as 'weak' or 'bad.'¹⁰³ While there were limits to the benefits volunteers like Johnny O'Connell could gain from being part of the right network, it is clear that despite the corrections made, he was treated with considerably more leniency than a volunteer with no such connections. For many deserters or otherwise 'deficient' volunteers, not to mention cases like Thomas Gembles or Alex Harvey discussed above, the lack of connections could have concrete negative consequences.

Conclusions

Being Scottish mattered while in Spain. It influenced volunteers' companions both on and off the battlefield, which in turn had a demonstrable impact on mortality, desertion and captivity, to say nothing of their day-to-day lived experience in Spain. That Scots banded together and sought each other out at every stage of the volunteering process is testimony to the value placed on maintaining existing relationships in difficult and testing conditions, and the continued importance of the Communist Party networks sketched in Chapter Two. Yet this is not simply a question of nationality and imagined common ground between Scottish volunteers – locality is particularly vital in

¹⁰⁰ Donaldson to Kerrigan, 15 February 1938, MML.

¹⁰¹ 'John O'Connell – Declaration', RGASPI, 545/6/180/31.

¹⁰² 'John O'Connell – Evaluation', 19 October 1938, RGASPI.

¹⁰³ 'John O'Connell – Evaluation', 5 November 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/180/28.

understanding the way in which volunteers sought out companions in Spain. The relationships that shaped Scottish clusters in Spain were formed in local political communities throughout Scotland. These comrades did not just volunteer together, they travelled, fought and died together. At no point in the volunteering experience did their prior relationships become irrelevant. However, it would be a mistake to ignore Ian MacDougall's words quoted at the start of this chapter. Scots should not be regarded as inherently exceptional. What distinctiveness they showed is for the most part a matter of scale – groupings and networks grew from pre-existing relationships fostered by the particularly active political communities that existed in the hubs of Scottish recruitment for the International Brigades. The relative unimportance of banal signifiers of identity indicates that the arguments presented in this chapter are applicable to any grouping that saw especially concentrated recruitment from specific communities. As such, it is likely that local and regional identities influenced the lived experience of volunteering in the International Brigades, regardless of nationality.

These conclusions also point to the enduring power of networks in the International Brigades. Even when physically separated, being part of a Scottish network influenced other aspects of volunteers' experiences in Spain. It determined how quickly and from whom their family received news, kept them informed while in Spain, shaped perceptions of their reliability and character among communist elites and allowed for safe and productive informal discussions, including under otherwise adverse circumstances such as captivity. It also allowed for heightened surveillance of individuals, facilitated propaganda efforts and opened volunteers to manipulation at the hands of their peers. In these ways, the Communist Party was able to effectively leverage Scottish political communities not just to bolster recruitment but also to further their goals in Spain. As a result, having the right social connections and being part of the right networks offered tangible benefits, while lacking them meant intolerance, suspicion and less support from the Party in Spain and at home.

This would have a tangible impact on the political cultures of the British
Battalion

Chapter Four: Political Cultures

Soon after crossing the Spanish border, and reaching the international, polyglot Republican outpost at Figueras, Scottish volunteer John Dunlop recalled a strange encounter amidst the general atmosphere of camaraderie. He found himself seated beside a German man, who seemed 'a little bit odd.'

We thought that this man was really not one of us. That was the feeling that we had about him, because he did not seem to talk the same kind of language as ourselves. The whole atmosphere about him was different. Well, a day or two later we were taken in trucks and put on the train to go to Barcelona... We saw our strange friend walking down the track... the Frenchmen dashed away round, back up the track the way we had come. The next thing we knew here they were back again, hustling along this German. He was brought on the train and was pushed into a seat opposite me, against the window, and a crowd of us round about so the chap had really no chance to escape...

When we got into Barcelona the German was taken away and we never heard of or saw him again. But the curious fact about him was that he was wearing three suits of clothes. He had three pairs of trousers on and three jackets, and was walking along this railway track in the middle of May. So either he must have been a bit off his head or he was not what we in Scotland would call the clean tattie. We assumed, and I think rightly, that the man was a spy.¹

Dunlop's vignette highlights the role of communist norms in enabling understanding and connections between volunteers. Despite coming from dozens of countries, and speaking nearly as many tongues, the International Brigades still shared a common language, a political language whose use implicitly framed a series of basic assumptions about how the world worked, or ought to work. Some level of fluency in this language of international Stalinism was vital, acting as a shibboleth that enabled trust across personal and national

¹ Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 127–8.

divides. Equally, lack of fluency was a severe handicap. 'Spy' was a familiar term in the Stalinist lexicon, and one that might have dangerous consequences.

Two further aspects of this story stand out. The first is the link between language, behaviour and outcome, hardly a controversial observation so long after the linguistic turn.² In this case, not only was lack of fluency in the language of international communism a factor in engendering suspicion, the language itself was mobilised in persecuting the outsider. Tellingly, Dunlop and his diverse companions all readily came to the conclusion that this man was a spy, and this meant he needed to be caught, physically restrained and handed to the authorities. For these multinational comrades, 'spy' was a universally understood label for someone out of place, and, once applied, this label had an inevitable force to it, enough to convince local authorities to formalise the arrest. Secondly, the story indicates that fluency in this language predated their journey to Spain. This and other incidents confirm Lisa Kirschenbaum's argument that many volunteers were already highly familiar with Stalinist norms, and needed little prompting to apply them once in Spain.³ Stalinism was not a way of thinking imposed upon the International Brigades, but the product of a negotiation between pre-existing and new beliefs that led to shifting definitions of what Stalinism meant and how it was best applied.⁴ This in turn left space for the evolution of distinct political cultures in spaces such as the British Battalion, influenced not just by pre-existing notions of Stalinism but a broader spectrum of political and philosophical assumptions.

It is important to appreciate that despite its reputation, Stalinism in this time and place was neither monolithic nor totalitarian. Just as historians, notably Daniel Kowalsky, have shown that Soviet attempts to control and influence the Spanish Republic faced substantial political and logistical barriers, so too did

² While this account does not draw heavily on critical theory, see Elizabeth Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, 2004).

³ Lisa Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2015), 117–50.

⁴ On the Soviet and Comintern practices that were transplanted, in part, to Spain, see Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians* (London, 2015), esp. 73–89.

communist control over the International Brigades have significant limitations.⁵ While the NKVD wielded near-unchecked power in the Soviet Union in 1937-8, the same cannot be said of Soviet representatives in Spain – even had they aspired to emulate Stalin’s purges and show trials.⁶ Furthermore, by the very nature of communist movements in countries such as Britain, adherence to Stalinist norms and discipline was essentially voluntary. Moreover, just as in the Soviet Union itself, Stalinism could still be understood and experienced positively and there were ways in which critique, disagreement and dissent could be expressed that did not necessarily lead to suspicion or punishment.⁷ This carried over into Spain, where even during wartime there remained cultural and practical limits on the degree of coercion and disciplinary measures that could be imposed upon the volunteers. Stalinism, even in Spain, remained a voluntary belief system, which could still be accepted, questioned or to some extent even defied without risking life or freedom. Between the extremes of a relatively small core group of communists with an unconditional commitment to the Party line, and an even smaller number who took an open stand against communist control, most volunteers came to terms with the situation in their own way, for their own reasons.

The value of a Scottish perspective on these questions lies in their usefulness as a sample rather than a particular distinctiveness. Apart from studies of the International Brigades themselves, with their aforementioned limitations, much focus has been on the workings of the Comintern and its various leading personalities.⁸ Even studies such as Kirschenbaum’s tend to focus on a

⁵ Daniel Kowalsky, *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War* (New York, 2004).

⁶ Kirschenbaum makes the interesting suggestion that for many Comintern operatives, going to Spain was seen as a way to both figuratively and literally ‘escape’ the terror. Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 131–7.

⁷ Criticism, even in Soviet Russia under the purges, was never anathema to Stalinist political cultures. E.g. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford, 2000), 177–80.

⁸ E.g., E. H. Carr, *The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 1984); Stanley Payne, *The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and communism* (New Haven, 2004); Ronald Radosh, Mary Habeck and Grigory Sevostianov, *Spain Betrayed* (New Haven, 2004); Antonio Elorza and Marta Bizcarrondo, *Queridos camaradas: La Internacional Comunista y España, 1919–1939* (Barcelona,

transnational communist elite – the overlapping categories of ‘those of long standing’ in the Party or who had ‘worked or studied in the Soviet Union.’⁹ However, as the Scots’ experiences show, the nature of volunteers’ political beliefs varied considerably depending on their status and background, and appreciating this diversity is vital to understanding the International Brigades’ political cultures.

While this chapter aims to critically interrogate the political cultures of the International Brigades, including darker sides such as desertion and dissent, it is important to distinguish between a critical approach and criticism. While harshly critical accounts by historians such as James Hopkins and Rob Stradling have done a great deal to advance our knowledge of the British Battalion and the International Brigades, they have been less convincing in building a cohesive picture of how individual cases translated into a wider system of political repression.¹⁰ Doing so requires appreciating the gulf between the ubiquity of Stalinist norms, and their limitations in practice. At least in the British Battalion, the purpose of labelling an individual a Trotskyist, a saboteur or spy was not to justify and enable their liquidation. Obsessive monitoring of the volunteers did not lead to individual dissidents being singled out and persecuted. Instead, this chapter contends, Stalinism was mediated by other influences. For almost all of the Scottish volunteers, even senior Party officials, this was their first real chance to put their political ideas into practice. They were fluent in the language of Stalinism, had accepted the need for discipline and sacrifices for the cause, but were only just discovering what this meant in a wartime context. While they might desire to measure up to a Bolshevik ideal in the eyes of their peers both national and international, the volunteers were still the product of other political and moral cultures.

1999). Skoutelsky contextualises the International Brigades within Comintern and Republican politics, Remi Skoutelsky, *Novedad en el frente* (Madrid, 2006), 285–338

⁹ Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 87.

¹⁰ Especially relevant here are Robert Stradling, ‘English-speaking Units of the International Brigades: War, Politics and Discipline’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 45:4 (2010), 744–767; James Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire* (Stanford, 1998). See also Cecil Eby, *Comrades and Commissars* (Pennsylvania, 2007); R. Dan Richardson, *Comintern Army* (Lexington, 1982).

This chapter explores this subject across three themes, each marrying an analysis of the structures of political control in the British Battalion with an appreciation of how they were understood and experienced. The first deals with surveillance and political discourse. Surveillance differed in implementation and intent from the totalitarian structures imagined by critics, and in practice the constraints of Stalinist modes of communication were more potent in shaping political expression, with fluency in the forms of Marxist-Leninist democratic centralism particularly vital for expressing political views. The second section examines demoralisation and disaffection. Pre-existing constructions and understandings of communism and Stalinism, especially the claim that their methods were uniquely efficient and effective, were vital in shaping the political attachment of ordinary volunteers. However, these preconceived notions of the organisational benefits of communism could be contradicted, sometimes violently, and disaffection can often best be understood as reactions to the Communist Party's failure to live up to its own values. Finally, the third section looks at systems of punishment. Despite the picture painted by revisionist histories, far from a well-oiled system for identifying, containing and exterminating non-conformists, the treatment of troublesome individuals indicates that the British Battalion was ill-equipped for dealing with political dissent. For all their talk of Trotskyites at home and abroad, British communists were surprisingly ill-prepared to counter actual political dissent with anything more than words.

Political Organisation, Surveillance and Discourse

Writing a decade after the war, Hamish Fraser described what he saw as the totalitarian structure of the International Brigades.

Consider the following picture of the Soviet State in embryo, as seen in a typical Communist unit of the Republican army. There was of course, as in all armies other than anarchist ones, a military leadership. To share its responsibility and at the same time to check upon it there was the Political Commissariat. To check upon both, there was the SIM (Military Investigation Service) – Spanish equivalent of the NKVD. And to complete

the system of espionage, there was the party that operated within all three in addition to its other responsibilities...

Think, if you can, what this fourfold system of espionage means in terms of the freedom of the individual. It means that in every unit of such an army, from the platoon upwards, there are in addition to officers and NCOs, a representative of the political apparatus, a representative of the secret police and as many party men as there are members of the party. And in case the reader may imagine that there may be any danger of laxity in this fourfold check-up, let me hasten to assure him that there is no such danger for the simple reason that all four organisations see to it that reports are handed in daily to the agent one step further up the ladder of the hierarchy, so that the supreme command may not be in ignorance of anything that appertains to the 'welfare' of their charges. It need hardly be added that one is not particularly free to give expression to 'dangerous' thoughts under such supervision.¹¹

Fraser knew what he was talking about. He had been a SIM agent, and had direct knowledge of its workings.¹² Yet his account, perhaps deliberately, ignores the gulf between the intent behind these structures, their actual functioning in practice and how they were understood by volunteers. In other words, Fraser gives little insight into how these structures were viewed by the volunteers themselves – and therefore how they actually influenced behaviour – and does not acknowledge the significant limitations that this system faced in practice.

Fraser also worked for the SIM relatively late in the conflict.¹³ Particularly before the SIM was founded in August 1937, surveillance of the International Brigades was carried out on an *ad hoc* basis.¹⁴ John Lochore, for instance, was asked to join 'the intelligence services' by George Aitken in early 1937, tasked with submitting 'reports of anything that was untoward, treacherous or otherwise.'¹⁵ Although Lochore claimed never to have reported anything, he evidently forgot at least one instance. Written from Madrigueras in March 1937, it mostly provides trivial observations about minor practical and personnel

¹¹ Hamish Fraser, *The Truth About Spain* (Oxford, 1950), 18.

¹² 'HAMISH Fraser', RGASPI, 545/6/136/40.

¹³ Although difficult to determine precisely, Fraser appears to have worked for the SIM from May 1938. All references to his SIM role mention the rank of lieutenant; this promotion was published in 'Orden de la Brigada', 26 April 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/429/234.

¹⁴ Skoutelsky, *Novedad*, 344–6.

¹⁵ Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices from War*, 120.

issues. Someone, whose name he thought was 'Anderson', 'gave some trouble', and was therefore 'being watched well.' One unnamed comrade was 'walking about but doesn't seem attached anywhere', and he noted 'irregularities' in volunteers travelling between Albacete and Madrigueras.¹⁶ Lochore's report casts a different light on Fraser's claims. While at first glance it confirms the eagle-eyed nature of surveillance, with 'Anderson' being 'watched well' for merely grumbling, Lochore's frequent imprecision regarding names does not speak to a well-oiled machine that efficiently conveyed information up the political chain of command. In all, the document gives the impression of an untrained operative seeking something substantive to report to superiors, with little idea of what they actually wanted to know. It is likely his superiors had little idea either.

Even allowing for the formalisation and professionalisation of this work over time, the report-generating culture that Fraser describes was never as monolithic as portrayed. Regular political reports had a tendency to skirt over or downplay substantive issues, preferring to highlight positive developments and efforts.¹⁷ A commissar who reported defects was only inviting intrusion from superiors demanding action or threatening replacement. Fred Thomas, for instance, noted just how little resemblance to reality such reports could have, gently mocking Bob Cooney's daily lie that 'the morale of the troops remains high', while the Battalion seethed about delayed repatriation in late 1938.¹⁸ Critical or interrogative reports tended to be written by outsiders when something went wrong, not by commissars dealing with day-to-day problems.¹⁹ In fact, these daily reports also challenge Fraser's cynicism about concern for volunteers' welfare: commissars often highlighted practical problems in an attempt to get them resolved. After a series of reports in April-May 1938

¹⁶ John Lochore, 'Report Madrigueras 16th to 19th March 1937', 20 March 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/89/6.

¹⁷ The most complete run of Battalion-level reports are in RGASPI, 545/3/497.

¹⁸ Fred Thomas, *To Tilt at Windmills* (East Lansing, 1996), 168.

¹⁹ E.g. 'Report on and Recommendations re the English Battalion', [December 1937?], AGGCE, PS-Aragon, Box 6, File 9. The author is unclear, but was likely a Brigade-level representative.

highlighting the Battalion's clothing needs, Cooney resorted to brutal sarcasm to make his point.²⁰

Fashion note: Pants are being worn short this season – in some cases so short as to be hardly visible. Boots are being worn without soles.²¹

Such reports rarely touched on individuals as imagined by Fraser, and tended to deal with morale and discipline only in general terms. There were, however, other channels available. Perhaps most infamous were the 'characterisations', a broad effort to summarise and categorise each volunteers' political and military reliability. Yet these were far more ambiguous than they first appear. The characterisations' repeating formulae and authors indicate strongly that this was not the gradual outcome of espionage reports from informants, but rather exercises in which certain individuals were given lists of volunteers on whom to offer their opinion. Among the Scots, Cooney, Peter Kerrigan and Alec Donaldson sometimes performed this duty, alongside other senior communists such as Arthur Olorenshaw and Mick Economides.²² The inevitable result was a slew of hasty, ill-informed and occasionally contradictory observations. Charles McLean of Dundee, for instance, was evaluated twice in the space of a week, first judging him to be 'good', 'steady' and 'brave.' Three days later, another report took the opposite view – he was 'bad', 'anti-Party' and 'anti-Leadership', and, memorably, 'not intelligent enough to be a Trotskyist.'²³

The language of Stalinism seeped into these evaluations. Volunteers might be 'lumpen', 'demoralised' or 'inactive', an 'opportunist' or a 'bad' or 'mediocre' element, or worse, a 'disruptor', 'provocateur', 'spy' or 'Trotskyist'.²⁴ Many of these labels were used liberally, to the extent that one is left with the impression that few volunteers measured up to expectations. Yet it is curious how little power these labels appeared to have. While being branded a

²⁰ RGASPI, 545/3/497/20-45.

²¹ Bob Cooney, 'Commissar's Report', 14 May 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/497/45.

²² Evaluations made during the conflict were generally attributed to an individual, while a three-person committee signed final evaluations, but it is otherwise difficult to establish a precise chronology due to the frequent absence of dates. RGASPI, 545/6/100-218.

²³ The two reports are side by side in his personal file, RGASPI, 545/6/171/39-40.

²⁴ E.g. 'Lista de Elementos Internacionales Sospechos', RGASPI, 545/3/451/165-8.

Trotskyist would seem an immensely serious accusation, it was no guarantee of any special punishment, much less liquidation. William Bannerman, for example, noted to have 'Trotskyite tendencies', never faced any action against him whatsoever.²⁵ Dundonian George Poustie was similarly noted to have 'Anarcho-Trotskyite' views, which had made him a 'disruptive element.' However, it was not until he deserted – allegedly to join an anarchist unit – that he faced punishment, and even then his treatment was unexceptional, being assigned to a fortification detail before his capture during the Aragon retreats.²⁶ In fact, it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish any pattern to the punishments meted out to those receiving Stalinist labels. The most persuasive interpretation is that such labels were applied after an individual had fallen from grace. This is aptly demonstrated by cases where dissenting views emerged after volunteers had left Spain, such as John Paterson of Edinburgh, who attacked the 'Stalinists' controlling the International Brigades after going home, but was never identified for censure during his actual service.²⁷ Deserters or criminals were not presciently labelled as troublemakers; rather, their crime led to a re-evaluation of their prior service and character. Labels followed punishment rather than the other way around.

This suggests that rather than being a system designed to monitor and control political expression, these systematic evaluations had another purpose. One route to understanding it is the communist view that their success relied on the identification, training and development of exceptional activists, or 'cadres', to provide the required level of leadership at all levels. In its ideal, this was a truly transnational system – local districts identified talent and provided training, developed further at the national level and, for a chosen few, at the

²⁵ 'BANNERMAN, Wm', RGASPI, 545/6/103/63.

²⁶ 'POUSTIE George', RGASPI, 545/6/186/44.

²⁷ Correspondence between Tom Murray and John Paterson details, along a recognisably POUM/ILP line, Paterson's objections to Stalinism in the International Brigades. NLS, Tom Murray Papers (TMP), Box 4, File 4. It is unclear whether he changed his mind upon his return, or kept quiet at the time. RGASPI, 545/6/183/78–9.

International Lenin School at Moscow.²⁸ National Communist Parties were under constant pressure from the Comintern to expand, improve and justify its cadre policy, and this dynamic carried over into the International Brigades, with the identification and development of cadres a key concern for leaders at all levels.²⁹

There is no doubt that the CPGB saw its cadre policy as intertwined with the International Brigades. Spain was seen as a crucible from which activists would emerge hardened and experienced, providing a new generation of leaders for the Party.³⁰ Robert Walker, for instance, observed in December 1937 that 'there's no doubt the Party in Britain is going to be immensely enriched from the ranks of the IB when this is over.'³¹ Moreover, peacetime approaches to cadre development informed practice in Spain. Assessing potential – now as section commanders and commissars, rather than district committee representatives – was still a major concern. This meant an almost universal need for information about recruits and veterans alike, to identify those who performed well and demonstrated potential for promotion. A negative evaluation, therefore, was usually not a punishment, but a warning against their being trusted with further responsibility. This in turn helps explain why so many volunteers were framed negatively, even when their military service was satisfactory – they were not being measured against their actual service, but their perceived potential.

There is considerable evidence for this interpretation. For one, volunteers who died tended to not have accrued evaluations, indicating that it tended to happen either near their return home or following a transgression.³² The single most

²⁸ Gidon Cohen and Kevin Morgan, 'Stalin's Sausage Machine. British Students at the International Lenin School, 1926–37', *Twentieth Century British History* 13:4 (2002), 328–9.

²⁹ E.g., 'Report on Some Main Tactical and Cadre Problems Confronting the CPGB', 26 December 1937, RGASPI, 495/20/91/29–54.

³⁰ This aim was most explicitly reflected upon in CPGB Central Committee Meeting, 19 March 1939, 495/14/265/49,53. Equally, it was acknowledged that Spain had substantially disrupted cadre work in Britain. 'On the work of the Cadre Commission', 16 August 1937, RGASPI, 495/14/241/36–7.

³¹ Walker to Kerrigan, 30 December 1937, MML, Box 50, File Wk/1.

³² Ernest Sim of Aberdeen, for instance, was in Spain from October 1937 until his death in September 1938, without ever receiving an evaluation. 'SIM, Ernest', RGASPI, 545/6/200/44–6.

extensive attempt to evaluate volunteers came immediately prior to their withdrawal in December 1938, with some completed just days before the volunteers returned to Britain.³³ Such documents could have little bearing on how individuals were treated in Spain; their only logical use was informing Party work at home. A summary was sent back to Britain, alongside a letter from Andre Marty explaining the logic of the evaluations, which classified each volunteer as either 'cadre', 'good', 'fair', 'weak' or 'bad'.³⁴ It was very clear that the purpose had been to evaluate the volunteers' potential for future Party roles.³⁵ Cadres, for instance, might 'play a valuable role in the majority of district leaderships', while the merely 'Good' might be 'cadres in the local committees' but would likely 'greatly benefit from a course of political training.' Conversely, while 'Weak' comrades 'can do useful work', 'the Party should never forget the weakness they have shown in Spain' and 'bad' volunteers were to be excluded from the Party altogether.³⁶ Both timing and method indicate an effort to manage human resources, not monitor or punish those with dissenting political views.

Comintern cadre policy was also reflected in attempts to gather autobiographical information on the volunteers. This was common practice in the Soviet Union, where foreign communists were required to complete a series of forms and oral declarations about their personal histories, which in turn acted to enhance surveillance and control of the Party membership.³⁷ In Spain, cadres often had to provide detailed autobiographical statements early in their service, while those who joined the PCE also filled out long autobiographical questionnaires, processes that were more haphazard than in the Soviet Union

³³ William Bell of Saltcoats, for instance, was only evaluated at the end of November – after he had actually left Spain. 'William Bell – Evaluation', 29 November 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/105/54. This was deliberate – one report noted efforts to extend the system of 'characterisations' to those who had already left Spain. 'Problemas Generales', 5 February 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/441/101–4.

³⁴ Marty to CPGB Secretariat, 12 December, RGASPI, 545/6/94/28–9.

³⁵ This was also emphasised in a letter from Marty to Pollitt, 7 December 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/87/32.

³⁶ Marty to CPGB Secretariat, 12 December 1938, RGASPI.

³⁷ Studer, *Transnational World*, 73–5.

but broadly comparable.³⁸ Attempts to extend this process to rank and file volunteers on their departure, however, exposed the limits to the transmission of Stalinist cultures to Spain. For many volunteers, there was little impetus to fill out these forms fully or faithfully, subverting their use as a window into their personal and political backgrounds.

Beyond indicating the limits of Stalinism in Spain, this attempt to expand the boundaries of autobiographical declarations resulted in a useful set of sources, allowing junior or 'undeveloped' volunteers the chance to express themselves in a way usually reserved only for the Party faithful. As such, these particular forms provide insight into those who were neither 'true believers' nor overtly at odds with the Party. Using several isolated examples, James Hopkins and Robert Stradling claim that these forms confirm an atmosphere of paranoia, pointing to several responses indicating that they felt unsafe expressing dissenting views.³⁹ Yet this also indicates that perceived political surveillance had limited impact in curtailing political expression. While these individuals had concerns, they were nonetheless comfortable openly admitting to holding dissenting views while still in Spain.

A wider sample provides a somewhat more nuanced picture than Hopkins and Stradling allowed. Nearly half of the thirty-one Scots whose forms were preserved left political questions blank or gave fragmented or single-word responses, perhaps indicating disinterest, or simply that the long form was tedious to complete. Disinterest in politics was also conveyed by responses indicating that they had not studied the Spanish Government's '13 Points' programme.⁴⁰ Most answers, fragmented or not, were positive, ranging from John Alcorn's sole observation that 'Fascism must be crushed whatever the price', to Hugh Sloan, who wrote several florid lines in response to most

³⁸ For a self-composed autobiography, see 'Auto-biography – Joe Holland', 25 April 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/149/28–9. For a PCE form, see 'Biografia de Militantes – McColl Thomas', 20 October 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/169/54–5.

³⁹ Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 271; Stradling, 'English-speaking Units', 749.

⁴⁰ E.g. 'George Forbes – Declaration', 19 November 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/135/14. Forbes left almost all the political questions blank, but did take time to clarify that he had not bothered studying the 13 Points.

questions.⁴¹ This helps confirm the conclusion that while they considered themselves political, most working-class volunteers had less interest in abstract theory and doctrine.

However, despite this general positivity, this was not necessarily a place in which volunteers' views were sanitised. A substantial minority took the opportunity to express criticisms or grievances. Several, responding to questions about punishments received in Spain, indicated their resentment. James Glavin, who received a fine and a stint in a labour battalion for drinking, thought the verdict was just, 'but sentence was too harsh.'⁴² Robert McLean, jailed for desertion, also did not think that he had received 'just' treatment.⁴³ Yet both were still positive about the Battalion itself, with McLean writing that he was 'proud to have belonged to it although I wasn't a credit to it.'⁴⁴ Others trod a similar line. Allan Hughes thought there was 'much room for improvement' in the Battalion, echoed by James Arthur who noted that it 'could have been better.'⁴⁵ Yet both also responded positively to political questions, Arthur commenting that 'what I have heard of [the 13 Points] is excellent.'⁴⁶ The overall impression is of a frank willingness to identify problems, but distinguishing between individual grievances and the International Brigades as a whole. While, as discussed in the next section, it is a mistake to divorce practical complaints from political meaning, it is clear that while many volunteers found fault with the International Brigades, few questioned the cause itself.

The few such forms completed by senior communists contrast with the others, while providing their own insights. George Murray and Chris Smith were more senior than the norm for this form, and gave long, detailed responses, befitting their advanced political development. Yet both also took the opportunity to

⁴¹ 'John Alcorn – Declaration', RGASPI, 545/6/101/16; 'Hugh Smith – Declaration', RGASPI, 545/6/202/87.

⁴² 'James Glavin – Declaration', RGASPI, 545/6/140/26.

⁴³ 'Robert McLean – Declaration', 3 November 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/171/63.

⁴⁴ 'Robert McLean – Declaration', RGASPI.

⁴⁵ 'James Arthur – Declaration', RGASPI, 545/6/102/32; 'Allan Hughes – Declaration', RGASPI, 545/6/150/16.

⁴⁶ 'James Arthur – Declaration', RGASPI.

point out flaws. Murray criticised the International Brigades' 'military weaknesses' stemmed from the 'avoidable exposure of officers to danger,' while Smith claimed that their 'military organisation very often lags behind that of Spanish Brigades.'⁴⁷ As a SIM representative, Murray's willingness to offer criticism is especially interesting.⁴⁸ Thanks to his job, Murray would have been more aware than most as to the limits of acceptable expression, not to mention any potential consequences. That he felt comfortable speaking his mind to at least some extent indicates that the effect of surveillance was not as draconian as claimed by the likes of Hamish Fraser. Bob Cooney also showed little fear when castigating the SIM to his superiors after the mistaken arrest and imprisonment of Eugene McParland.

I think something should be done about the slovenly methods of the SIM... Comrade Ivan tries to justify himself by saying that 'McParland deserves to be arrested anyhow.' This is irresponsible talk and such an attitude puts weapons into the hands of bad elements.⁴⁹

As Baxell points out, Cooney's willingness to voice such criticism challenges any argument that the SIM wielded absolute power over the International Brigades.⁵⁰ Moreover, it is difficult to imagine how any system designed to curtail or punish political deviance could have functioned in the British Battalion without the knowledge or participation of Cooney, its chief political officer. Rather, the relative independence of figures such as Cooney – unimpeachably loyal yet willing to stand up to superiors – points to their potential as circuit breakers between the extremes of repression enacted by the SIM or NKVD in other arenas, and the relatively isolated political cultures in individual battalions.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Smith was the only volunteer to (mildly) criticise Republican policy. 'Chris Smith – Declaration', 3 November 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/202/32; 'George Murray – Declaration', 3 November 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/176/87.

⁴⁸ 'Averiguaciones sobre los cuadros', RGASPI, 545/6/176/80

⁴⁹ Cooney to Gates, 8 May 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/497/36.

⁵⁰ Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 263.

⁵¹ Peter Kerrigan was also an occasional barrier between the British and Andre Marty, who he regarded as 'a very difficult man'. Peter Kerrigan, IWMSA, Tape 810/5.

Cooney, Murray and Smith were clearly experienced enough political operatives that they felt qualified and able to make criticisms. This reflects the importance of democratic centralist doctrine in the Communist Party, with members expected to communicate criticism and feedback to their superiors, while strictly maintaining the Party line in public.⁵² Moreover, in Smith and Murray's case, the conservative nature of their criticism indicates sensitivity to misinterpretation. Their comments can be interpreted as aiming to demonstrate an active and critical political mind, while sticking to safe subjects that would not be construed as disloyalty. As such, while their words point to the limits of any absolutist interpretation of political control in the International Brigades, they cannot be taken as evidence that volunteers were able or willing to freely express political views. Instead, they and other examples point to a more complex set of constraints on political expression, which operated through a series of Stalinist norms that acted to police the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable discourses. These norms worked not just by defining suitable topics for discussion, but also by shaping the language used, the appropriate settings and individuals' personal standing.

Less politically experienced individuals were more likely to run afoul of these unwritten rules. An outsider's perspective is found in the memoir of Fausto Villar Esteban, who recalled a fraught experience when asked his views on strategy by some American communists. After hesitating but deciding to 'speak [his] mind', for most of his talk 'all of the Brigaders are nodding approval, but the moment I mention the chances of Franco striking out for the Mediterranean, a chorus of murmurs goes up labelling me a defeatist and even a fascist.' Although his friends smoothed the incident over, Esteban had learned his lesson, and was careful to frame his observations more prudently afterwards.⁵³ Charles O'Neill, an inexperienced Glaswegian communist, also stumbled over these unwritten rules. In O'Neill's case, he was required to make an abject

⁵² John McIlroy, 'The Establishment of Intellectual Orthodoxy and The Stalinization of British Communism 1928-1933', *Past & Present* 192 (2006), 188-9.

⁵³ Villar Esteban, *Un Valencianito*, 60-1.

apology to Political Commissar Dave Springhall for 'allowing my personal feeling to get the better of me' and 'neglecting his CP line.'⁵⁴ However, his 'political honesty' and good front service worked in his favour, and O'Neill received generally positive evaluations, albeit not regarding his future as a complex political thinker.⁵⁵ Such incidents confirm not just the existence of opaque boundaries to 'acceptable' criticisms, but also the importance of personal standing and strong relationships in mitigating any consequences.⁵⁶

Status and unwritten rules also defined more formal meetings, characterised by Cooney as 'where our weaknesses were thrashed out in a spirit of healthy self-criticism.'⁵⁷ This can be understood as further evidence of democratic centralism in practice, with meetings acting as acceptable spaces for criticisms to be voiced, although Party leaders still expected criticism to be voiced in certain ways. However, not all such discussions could be mediated strictly by Stalinist norms. Tom Murray was candid in acknowledging the reactive nature of some such meetings, particularly when confronting simmering issues like repatriation.⁵⁸ One report from August 1937 noted that once withdrawn from the line, 'almost every form of complaint began to be heard at once, combined with cynical expressions about the conduct of the war, the offensive, and the government.' Even 'good' Party members took part, hinting at a dynamic where collective discontent provided a degree of safety and legitimacy for questioning military and political leadership.⁵⁹ Such incidents recurred throughout the war. An 'extraordinary meeting' of XV Brigade Commissars in September 1938 discussed the ubiquitous and open complaints regarding their exhaustion and

⁵⁴ O'Neill to Springhall, nd, RGASPI, 545/6/181/73. This process of forcing an offender to reflect on their failings was evidently a favourite of Springhall's. Boyle to Springhall, 18 January 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/109/53-5.

⁵⁵ 'Charles O'Neill - Evaluation', 19 October 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/181/67.

⁵⁶ Another case was Arthur Nicoll, the AT Battery Political Commissar. His positive evaluation on leaving Spain noted occasional 'thoughtless criticism of high command', indicating both that such criticism was noted and considered significant, but also that it was outweighed by Nicoll's standing and service. 'Arthur Nicoll - Evaluation', 5 November 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/178/34

⁵⁷ Cooney, *Proud Journey*, 53. Bill Paynter characterised meetings similarly in *Volunteer for Liberty*, 25 October 1937, 3.

⁵⁸ Murray in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 314-15.

⁵⁹ 'Report on Morale of XV Brigade', 8 August 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/435/72-3.

desire to return home, even among officers.⁶⁰ Such examples suggest that the enforcement of Stalinist norms required collective understanding and policing of the boundaries, and as such could not simply be imposed upon an unwilling group. While the leadership was naturally concerned about such views, so long as they were commonly held there was little they could do.

In some cases, however, the Party was very successful in shaping the boundaries of acceptable discourse, notably in the response to the May 1937 fighting in Barcelona between communist-backed government forces and the POUM.⁶¹ The CPGB had especial reason for concern, even beyond the usual obsession with 'Trotskyists'. The small British contingent in the POUM militia, as well as the presence in Barcelona of other non-communist activists, meant that other versions of events spread to Britain – a particular concern in Scotland, with several prominent Scottish ILP members and anarchists, notably Ethel MacDonald, able to provide alternative versions of events.⁶² Ignoring or downplaying the incident might have allowed space for these anti-Stalinist critiques of the communist role in Spain to take root among less ideologically committed volunteers.

The response was a swift and unprecedented propaganda campaign. Within days, the XV Brigade press published articles on the 'revolutionary face of fascism', containing unprecedented vitriol.

Following months of patient explaining, the Government has finally determined to tolerate no more 'leftist' sabotage in the rearguard. Not sabotage alone, but thinly disguised banditry alienating the sympathies of the peasant and small trader from the Republic... Against the Fascist inspired terrorists the central Government made its hand felt, taking full responsibility for public order in Catalonia...

The hour for physical extermination of Trotskyism has arrived.⁶³

⁶⁰ 'Parte extraordinario', 6 September 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/435/141–3.

⁶¹ These incidents were famously, and controversially, chronicled in George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London, 1986), esp. 148–169. A more recent overview is Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic At War 1936–1939* (Cambridge, 2002), 254–315.

⁶² Angela Jackson, *British Women and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2002), 151.

⁶³ *Nuestro Combate*, 8 May 1937.

This marked a distinct departure from the usual language of unity and the Popular Front. It is a sign, perhaps, that the extremes of Stalinism were only lightly buried, that the leap to policies of extermination was uncomfortably small. Any volunteer with connections to the Communist Party knew and understood the 'Trotskyist' label as signifying an enemy within, even before coming to Spain. As the Battalion was never called into direct action against the 'Trotskyists', it is difficult to say whether these labels would have served their purpose in legitimising liquidation. Hugh Sloan recalled his newly-arrived group being asked whether they would be willing to 'help put an end' to the 'situation in Barcelona', to which 'the whole group agreed.'⁶⁴ What was meant and understood by this is vague, but ominous – although their willingness clearly predated arrival in Spain.

Such language made it impossible to formulate any sort of legitimate dissent when it came to the POUM. A firm line had been drawn around acceptable discourse, and crossing it would mean setting oneself against not only the Party, but also the Republican war effort itself, which all volunteers agreed was sacrosanct. That is not to say that these attacks should be viewed entirely cynically. Private and public records indicate that the British leadership wholeheartedly believed what they were saying about the POUM. Casual references in private letters between communist loyalists follow the public line closely, such as one message from William McGregor to Peter Kerrigan, commenting on how the POUM and ILP had engineered the 'rising in our rear at Barcelona.'⁶⁵ For Party activists, these attitudes dovetailed neatly with their views on the ILP contingent. Even months after the controversy in Barcelona, William McAulay reacted bitterly to what he saw as the ILP's attempt to piggyback on the International Brigades' reputation.

I showed your letter to several of the lads, and what surprised all of them, was the reference you made to the ILP speaking about an ILP

⁶⁴ Sloan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 199.

⁶⁵ McGregor to Kerrigan, 19 November 1937, MML, Box 50, File McG/1. On the ILP contingent, see Christopher Hall, *'Not Just Orwell': The Independent Labour Party Volunteers and the Spanish Civil War* (Barcelona, 2009).

section of the International Brigade. I have been in Spain now for 11 months and have never heard about it until I read your letter. We were all disgusted to hear that the ILP are attempting to cash in on the name of the International Brigade.⁶⁶

Such letters reflect the success of efforts to define political discourse surrounding the POUM and ILP. This was the result of consistent efforts to promote this line across several mediums. William Gilmour, for instance, wrote about one particularly effective lecture from American communist Bob Miller, who 'simplified the recent Barcelona disturbances, the intricacies, facts and figures were all proved to us by documents and newspaper cuttings', producing 'all that condemned the Trotskyites, and Fascists.'⁶⁷ Articles continued to appear regularly in the Brigade press, such as a supposed first-hand account entitled 'Trotskyist Traitors' by ILP volunteer J. A. Franford detailing the 'suspicious' activities he had witnessed while in the POUM militia, illustrated by a menacing caricature of Trotsky.⁶⁸ Even a year later, in June 1938, Tom Murray wrote home about the political meetings he organised about the 'Catalonian question' and how Trotskyism 'attempts to operate in Spain.'⁶⁹ Even in oral history interviews decades later, there was often unwillingness to deviate far from these views. For some, the vendetta against the POUM and Orwell would last a lifetime.⁷⁰

Yet it would be a mistake to view this episode as entirely typical of the XV Brigade press. There is no doubt that the Party controlled the editorial line in the main publications, *Volunteer for Liberty* and *Nuestro Combate/Our Fight*, but they were still spaces that could allow for diverse forms of expression.⁷¹ Editors appeared genuinely concerned not just with conveying the correct political message but providing a useful service, soliciting advice, suggestions and

⁶⁶ McAulay to Kerrigan, 19 November 1937, MML, Box 50, File McA/1.

⁶⁷ Gilmour to Paterson, 7 June 1937, MML, Box 50, File Gl/24.

⁶⁸ *Volunteer for Liberty*, 13 September 1937, 9–10.

⁶⁹ Tom to Janet Murray, 16 June 1938, MML, Box D-4, File My/14.

⁷⁰ E.g. Clarke. Brown and Sloan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 64, 109, 198–9, 234. For an 'official' example of lingering animosity, see Bill Alexander, 'George Orwell and Spain' in Norris (ed.), *Inside the Myth. Orwell: Views from the Left* (London, 1984), 85–102.

⁷¹ On these newspapers' nature and purpose, see Mirta Núñez Díaz-Balart, 'Un cuadrilátero para el combate político: la prensa de las Brigadas Internacionales', *Ayer* 56 (2004), 121–41.

content from readers.⁷² Particularly in the earliest days of publication, *Nuestro Combate* was not written as a monolithic imposition of the Party line, but as a dialogue, implicitly giving space to and engaging with criticism of the political and military leadership. The first trial of British volunteers for desertion in March 1937 was one such instance.

All of them have been connected with the working-class movement at home. These men pleaded guilty. They claimed worry about their relatives. Are not the over whelming [sic] majority of the comrades in the same position...

Let us be frank. There are still other comrades who murmur that the sentences were harsh. We urge such comrades to reflect again upon the character of the struggle and to consider the danger of such weaklings in our ranks.⁷³

Similarly, the next issue confronted demands for relief, arguing that their leaders 'know that better than we do' and concluding that while everyone could use a rest, 'it must not be as a result of committees, but when our comrades in the Brigade can get it for us.'⁷⁴ An April issue acknowledged complaints about the postal service, a subject that still came in for gentle mockery months later.⁷⁵ While there is no doubt that this was an overt defence of the Party position, these formulations were qualitatively different from those used in describing the POUM and Trotskyism, in acknowledging critical voices and responding to them.

Although most articles were earnest and serious, humour was not neglected altogether. Most full issues of both journals contained at least one political cartoon, often lampooning the foibles of fascism and its leaders.⁷⁶ Aside from providing a rich vein of comic material, the normalisation of explicitly anti-fascist humour served a useful political purpose. The use of humour could also be didactic – a long-running cartoon about the rhyming misadventures of

⁷² E.g. calls for 'comradely criticism' in *Nuestro Combate*, 13 March 1937.

⁷³ *Nuestro Combate*, 9 March 1937.

⁷⁴ *Nuestro Combate*, 10 March 1937.

⁷⁵ *Nuestro Combate*, 3 April 1937. Also *Nuestro Combate*, December 1937-January 1938, 9.

⁷⁶ E.g. *Nuestro Combate*, December 1937-January 1938, 8; *Volunteer for Liberty*, 3 January 1938, 11.

'Moocho Pinter' was one memorable way to reinforce correct military behaviour.⁷⁷ A regular column named 'After Taps' reported brief vignettes and in-jokes about XV Brigade members, often impenetrably obscure.⁷⁸ Here, the purpose was far more mundane but just as vital – entertainment and camaraderie. A similar mix of politics and fun is visible in the entertainment the volunteers organised for themselves, such as amateur dramatics, which might be based on anything from sending up Franco to the classic gag of dressing up in drag.⁷⁹

Occasionally, newspapers allowed for slightly edgier expressions of humour. This was sometimes a matter of form rather than substance, such as an article on beards using the tone and structure of the more usual political exhortations, gently mocking the newspaper's propaganda as well as the beardless.⁸⁰ Such content was common in the 'wall newspapers' run by smaller units, where articles were posted on bulletin boards that could be read in passing. Few examples remain, but one curated by Bob Cooney during training at Tarazona survives in the Comintern archive.⁸¹ Conceived of as an outlet for petty griping among the recruits, articles were often pointedly satirical. Even Cooney joined in the fun, writing a droll 'Orders of the Day', complete with illustrations.⁸² Another mock report on a training exercise pilloried the volunteers' collective obsession with food, but also showed keen awareness of the political language of the International Brigades, memorably blaming the failure to share out pilfered grapes on a 'low level of political understanding.'⁸³

Such satires occupy an interesting cultural space. They were not intended to challenge authority directly, especially under the guardianship of a figure such as Cooney. However, such efforts were immensely self-aware. They indicate that

⁷⁷ E.g. *Volunteer for Liberty*, 23 February 1938, 7.

⁷⁸ E.g. *Nuestro Combate*, December 1937-January 1938, 9.

⁷⁹ Brown in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 110. Also Arthur Nicoll, TLS, MS, Tape 956.

⁸⁰ *Volunteer for Liberty*, 3 January 1938, 11.

⁸¹ RGASPI, 545/2/266.

⁸² 'Orders for the Day', RGASPI, 545/2/266/168-9.

⁸³ 'Monday's Hike', [October 1937?], RGASPI, 545/2/266/128.

the authors – and presumably their audience – grasped that some aspects of the International Brigades’ political culture were ridiculous, and responded through ‘the curious British habit of taking the piss.’⁸⁴ While they might believe in the cause they fought for, and broadly approved of the methods employed, they were also able to realise and acknowledge that not everything worked perfectly. Seeking solace in humour, like many who find themselves in the grip of institutionalised absurdity, was a natural response. Such instances indicate that Stalinist norms were not simply imposed from above, rather, volunteers were aware of what was happening, able to critique and even mock some doctrinal excesses.⁸⁵ Equally, however, responding with humour indicates a willingness to accept absurdity in the name of the cause. The volunteers, instead of being faced with a stark choice between subjecting themselves fully to Stalinism or rejecting it outright, found some space in which to define their own response.

Demoralisation and Disaffection

When considering the range of responses the International Brigades volunteers might make to their political environment, it is worth returning briefly to several points made in earlier chapters about who the Scottish volunteers were and why they went to Spain. Ideological diversity was considerably less than has often been assumed, with the vast bulk of volunteers coming from within the Communist Party’s orbit. Yet equally, only a minority were committed communist ideologues – perhaps a quarter, as suggested in Chapter One – and most were not intellectuals. This is not to suggest they were stupid – far from it – but their attraction to communism was rarely fostered by an appreciation of its theoretical constructs. Books were not required for working-class Scots to see the problems plaguing Britain during the interwar period – in the words of

⁸⁴ John Peet, *The Long Engagement: Memoirs of a Cold War Legend* (London, 1989), 77.

⁸⁵ Research on humour in wartime highlights the extent that jokes are inherently subversive and uncontrollable from above. E.g. Christie Davies, ‘Humour is not a strategy in war’, *Journal of European Studies* 31 (2001), 396–412; Fritz Hillenbrand, *Underground Humour in Nazi Germany, 1933–1945* (London 1995).

David Anderson, it was ‘just plain common sense.’⁸⁶ In understanding adherence to communism as transcending a deliberate or considered decision, this section builds upon the work of Thomas Linehan, who explores the importance of activists’ emotional identification with communism.⁸⁷ For many working-class recruits who went to Spain, the attraction of communism was generally not its theoretical superiority to other forms of progressive thought, but its pragmatic and forthright activism. The claim that communism offered the only viable blueprint ‘with the potential to mount an effective revolutionary challenge to the capitalist order’ was a powerful one.⁸⁸ The pre-Spanish Civil War record of communist activism – demonstrations, strikes, Hunger Marches and so on – reinforced this central message that they were the party actually addressing society’s problems. These were ‘instinctive’ communists – for whom the Party was attractive on a visceral rather than intellectual level.⁸⁹

Naturally, volunteers cannot be categorised neatly into two categories of ‘intellectual’ versus ‘instinctive’ communists, and any given individual fell on a spectrum between the two. Most had been exposed to communist literature or lectures; equally, intellectual converts were animated by the thrill of taking direct action.⁹⁰ Yet it is still clear that most Scots clustered at one end of this spectrum. When they were asked what they had learned while in Spain, they did not praise their theoretical instruction. Rather, they pointed to the practical lessons. Andrew Smith, for instance, channelled the spirit if not the language of the Popular Front in proclaiming that ‘a people together makes a better policy than a divided mob.’⁹¹ Allan Hughes allowed that he had learned ‘how to use many firearms and to take charge of men.’⁹² Evaluations abound of individuals, often competent fighters, who had little or no ‘political development’, other

⁸⁶ Anderson in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 89.

⁸⁷ Thomas Linehan, *Communism in Britain 1920-39* (Manchester, 2007), esp. 83–108.

⁸⁸ Linehan, *Communism in Britain*, 5.

⁸⁹ This label is adapted from Scottish volunteer Steve Fullarton, who described his politics as ‘more instinctive than theoretical or dogmatic’, Fullarton in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 303.

⁹⁰ Linehan, *Communism in Britain*, 101.

⁹¹ ‘Andrew Smith – Declaration’, RGASPI, 545/6/202/18.

⁹² ‘Allan Hughes – Declaration’, RGASPI.

reports decried the fact that many volunteers seemed to know 'less about Spain now in a political sense than when they came here.'⁹³ Perhaps both typifying this archetype and confirming its ubiquity beyond Scotland, Dundonian David Menzies was noted to share 'the usual British characteristic of indifference to theory.'⁹⁴

Insofar as historians have acknowledged the perspective of these volunteers, the result has been to paint them as apolitical, sick of the preaching of Political Commissars, boring political meetings, or mystified by constant references to Marxist theory.⁹⁵ Such points can be sympathetic – many historians can relate to sitting unwillingly through dense theoretical discussions – or used as evidence that the Communist Party had lost the plot when it came to politicising the International Brigades.⁹⁶ Yet volunteers who disdained political theory were not necessarily apolitical. Rather, their understanding of politics and the purpose of the International Brigades and Communist Party was different – they were in Spain to take action, in accordance with their views that joined the Party if you wanted to get something done instead of talking about it. Being a communist meant being tough, pragmatic, organised and disciplined.⁹⁷ In Roderick MacFarquhar's words, it was the 'discipline, unity and comradeship' that made such a 'tremendous impression' on him and many others who joined.⁹⁸ Even

⁹³ Tapsell to Pollitt, 25 April 1937, MML, Box C, File 12/4. See Fifer Thomas Howie, a 'good and reliable soldier' but 'does not respond to attempts to make him interested in things political', 'Thomas Howie – Evaluation', 21 October 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/149/110.

⁹⁴ 'Menzies, Dave', RGASPI, 545/6/172/52.

⁹⁵ Baxell quotes several such instances, including mockery of political slogans and other 'Party bullshit'. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 144.

⁹⁶ For Eby, two varieties of Americans were in Spain – blow-hard, effete Party types, whose politics were ridiculous at best and dangerous at worst, compared to ordinary, masculine workers, with simple politics. Naturally, most volunteers fit neither caricature. Eby, *Comrades and Commissars*, e.g. 26–31.

⁹⁷ Tim Rees discusses the process of 'Bolshevisation' in interwar Communist Parties, using the Spanish case as a particular example but making it clear that this was a transnational phenomenon. Tim Rees, 'Anti-Trotskyism, Bolshevization and the Spanish Communist party, 1924–34', *Historical Research* 82:215 (2009), 131–56. See also McIlroy, 'The Establishment of Intellectual Orthodoxy', 187–226; William Chase, *Enemies Within the Gates?: The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934–1939* (New Haven, 2001), esp. 29–33; Randi Storch, "'The Realities of the Situation": Revolutionary Discipline and Everyday Political Life in Chicago's Communist Party, 1928–1935', *Labor* 1:3 (2004), 19–44.

⁹⁸ Roderick MacFarquhar, IWMSA, Tape 9234/3.

those who considered themselves anti-fascists rather than communists had often joined the International Brigades in the belief that the communists knew best how to defeat fascism. However, just as going to Spain could help affirm their political faith, the actual experience of serving in the International Brigades could challenge it.

This makes it problematic to draw any neat line between demoralisation and political dissent. Baxell attempts to do so, writing that desertion in particular 'did not so much represent a dissatisfaction with the political organisation of the battalion', but rather the 'high casualties' and the 'lack of leave and repatriation.'⁹⁹ These were indeed major drivers of desertion in Spain, yet such arguments are constrained by a limited vision of political belief. Given the nature of working-class volunteers' allegiance to communism – based on a belief in the effectiveness of communist methods, the competency of their leadership and their claims to best represent the working class – demoralisation can readily be understood as a loss of faith in the Party's promises.¹⁰⁰ Real or perceived incompetence was not just demoralising in its effects, but a challenge to their political understandings. If communist methods and leadership became seen as ineffective, or as out of step with their fundamental values, the resulting disaffection must be understood as political.

The potential for demoralisation to become political is best demonstrated by one of the most severe outbreaks of disillusionment in the Battalion's history: the aftermath of the Battle of Calaceite and subsequent capture of over one hundred British volunteers.¹⁰¹ This was one of the worst disasters in the British Battalion's history, and it is unsurprising that for many taken prisoner, faith in

⁹⁹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 138.

¹⁰⁰ This framework borrows from Thomas Linehan, who presents communism as a 'political religion', a problematic but useful idea offering insight into the nature of political belief among International Brigade recruits. Spain assumes an importance in this framework in offering a rare chance to see communist ideas in practice rather than as an imagined future – and thus could greatly reaffirm or undermine activists' faith. Linehan, *Communism in Britain*, 102–5. However, Stradling's assertion that the International Brigades were a 'theocracy or ideocracy in which Party 'priests' exercised a rarely challenged institutional supremacy' takes the concept too far. Stradling, 'English-speaking Units', 753.

¹⁰¹ Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 307–18.

communist leadership was shattered. In his secret report to the CPGB after their return, Gary McCartney recalled the first few days after capture.

It is to be regretted that during this period we cannot be very proud of a large number of prisoners. True, the position was very uncertain and in many instances the treatment received was violent... Many prisoners were apprehensive and a large number demoralised. They expressed violent reactions to the Party and Battalion leadership. The Party was held responsible for the general administration of the Battalion and that the Battalion leadership was ineffective. But for this, it was held, no-one would have been taken prisoner.¹⁰²

McCartney's judgement here – echoed throughout his report when referring to 'weak' or 'bad' elements – hints at the extent to which demoralisation went beyond despair at the prisoners' situation, but reflected a fundamental loss of faith in the effectiveness of communist leadership and methods. There can be no doubt that Calaceite was an unmitigated disaster.¹⁰³ Questioning the competence and intentions of the Party in the circumstance, and re-evaluating one's personal loyalties in light of this, was a natural response. For many volunteers, it was the Party's claim that they alone offered effective leadership against fascism that had won their allegiance, and their recent experiences had given them ample reason to revise this judgement. It is worth noting that McCartney's report was written by and for the CPGB leadership, and could hardly give credence to any notion of the Party's fundamental failures. Blaming the disaffected volunteers' own failings was the only way to avoid this.

For McCartney and other 'leading Party members', it was clear that they needed to organise, or risk substantial numbers of the prisoners collaborating with their captors. However, thanks to the timing, this task was considerably more difficult than it might have been. The British Battalion had received many new recruits before the battle, and there had been little time to get acquainted. Without established personal connections, 'it was extremely difficult for Party

¹⁰² Gary McCartney, 'Report from San Pedro', [1939?], MML, Box C, File 3/1, 3–4. Hereafter 'Report from San Pedro'.

¹⁰³ Dispatches from Spain took on an unprecedentedly gloomy tone after the battle. E.g. Paynter to Pollitt, 8 April 1938, MML, Box C, File 23/1.

members to consult', not least because some 'weak elements' were 'openly declaring their preference for Fascism' and 'applaud[ing] the Italian officers.'¹⁰⁴ In this atmosphere, it was connections from home that paved the way for cooperation. McCartney collaborated with two individuals known to him from Scotland, William Collins and John Penman, to form the basis of a secret committee.¹⁰⁵ This meant trust could be established quickly, allowing the committee to take shape relatively rapidly and with confidence in one another's reliability – a reminder of the continued importance of personal networks in Spain. This was not a specifically Scottish phenomenon. Unbeknownst to McCartney and his comrades, a separate group, centred on London Party circles, also formed a secret committee in these early days, along the same lines of established acquaintance and trust.¹⁰⁶ It is no coincidence that the Party districts best-represented in Spain – Scotland and London – were those able to utilise established networks and form committees. Only after the situation had calmed did these committees become aware of each other and eventually amalgamate.

Tensions also came to the fore in the various 'sharp divisions' that cropped up throughout their imprisonment, on issues as varied as whether they should agree to shout 'Franco' on parade, or if they should campaign for better food.¹⁰⁷ Initiatives boasted about later, such as educational lectures, 'had to be discontinued due to the activities of informers and the attitudes of the officers.'¹⁰⁸ Discontent could be difficult to address due to the situation. By necessity, the committee was secret, and had difficulty communicating and enforcing decisions.¹⁰⁹ The organisers also decided to assume what amounted to dictatorial powers, rejecting proposals that decisions should be discussed and ratified by smaller groups, on the basis that this was 'false democracy' and

¹⁰⁴ 'Report from San Pedro', 4.

¹⁰⁵ 'Report from San Pedro', 7.

¹⁰⁶ 'Report from San Pedro', 7.

¹⁰⁷ 'Report from San Pedro', 19–20.

¹⁰⁸ 'Report from San Pedro', 15.

¹⁰⁹ 'Report from San Pedro', 11.

increased the risk of penetration by informers.¹¹⁰ While precautions were certainly understandable, this attitude could breed resentment – even Party members started referring to them as ‘the Secret Six’, and ‘much criticism and condemnation’ came from both ‘bad elements’ and ‘Party members’ alike.¹¹¹ All of this meant that whatever the logic of their decisions, the Camp Committee, and by extension the Party, left itself open to accusations of arbitrariness, petty corruption and the uneven distribution of burdens and rewards. For some, such frustrations echoed their experiences of peacetime Communist Party branches.¹¹²

In general, McCartney’s report can be read as a justification of the line taken by the committee, presenting itself as a middle way between defeatism and the dangerous, hot-headed types who wanted to take a more activist line against their captors. This closely reflects two ways that demoralisation became linked to volunteers’ adherence to communism. On one hand, defeatism and collaboration points to a loss of faith in communist competence, and their ability to provide effective organisation and leadership – in other words, their central claim that they knew how to best lead and organise an effective political movement. This very episode was adapted for this propaganda purpose, with a pamphlet published claiming that that the Party’s approach to organising the prisoners was ‘undeniable proof of the value of Communist leadership.’¹¹³ On the other hand, however, the actions of ‘hot-headed’ types, points to difficulties living up to their promise of forthright activism, that the Party took action rather than simply talking about it. For volunteers who had been attracted to communism for either of these reasons, the experience of captivity could readily lead to their partial or full repudiation of communist leadership.

¹¹⁰ ‘Report from San Pedro’, 13.

¹¹¹ ‘Report from San Pedro’, 16.

¹¹² Greenock prisoner Dan Burns, for instance, eventually quit the Communist Party due to frustrations with branch members who talked rather than actually doing anything, MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 158–9.

¹¹³ Pamphlet, MML, Box 28 File A/1.

The politics of demoralisation could also be a trap for Communist Party functionaries in less stressful circumstances than captivity. So long as problems like poor morale were viewed as stemming from a lack of political understanding – best remedied by political instruction – they risked being seen as talkers rather than doers. Lectures about politics were unlikely to appease volunteers who doubted their leaders' ability to actually solve practical or administrative problems. Sometimes the best results were achieved by turning this question back on the volunteers, such as when Tom Murray stepped in to defuse tension ahead of the Battle of the Ebro in July 1938.

This deputy chappie was a Welshman... he was given the task of making a statement to strengthen the feelings and morale of those people who had been constantly talking about going home. He made such a mess of it that I intervened... I made a statement in which I said 'Look here, we're soldiers of the Spanish Army. The Government, Dr Negrin's Government, has a 13-point programme to which all of us have subscribed. We are the disciplined soldiers of the Spanish Army. We are not here to speculate about whether we're going to the front or going home... Meantime, we know that we are preparing for an offensive against the Fascists, and therefore the only question before us is how efficiently we can prepare.'¹¹⁴

Here, Murray describes reaching out to ordinary volunteers on their own terms, pointing out that they were there to take action, and everything else was secondary. While Murray may have been liberal with his self-praise, it is nonetheless clear that this method was considerably more effective than appeals to abstract political ideals. This points to morale problems stemming not from a lack of political will or instruction, but the inability of some senior communists to speak the same political language as the rank-and-file volunteers. For many volunteers, a political speaker who could cut through jargon and make a case plainly was highly valued.¹¹⁵ Interestingly, two of the most highly regarded Battalion Commissars, Cooney and Aitken, were both Scots. While this could be coincidental, it may also reflect the nature of Party

¹¹⁴ Tom Murray in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 314–15.

¹¹⁵ William Gilmour, for instance, praised Ralph Bates' 'knack in being able to analyse a deep political question in clear simple language, that all may understand him.' Gilmour to Paterson, 7 June 1937, MML.

work in Scotland. As noted previously, the emphasis on practical organisation over theoretical instruction in Scottish working-class communities may have given Scottish communists a predilection for emphasising problem solving over political harangues in Spain – traits both Cooney and Aitken were praised for by Scots and non-Scots alike.¹¹⁶

Murray's encounter also aptly illustrates the duality of the Political Commissar's role.¹¹⁷ A successful commissar could do much to identify and solve problems, acting as a mouthpiece for ordinary volunteers' concerns. However, they could also act as lightning rods for dissent and dissatisfaction, especially if they came to be seen as apologists for the mistakes and inequities of higher command, or as purely political figures who avoided frontline service.¹¹⁸ Many more practically-minded volunteers saw them as a nuisance; James Chalmers declared when leaving that he had 'never met a Political Commissar of any use' and the Battalion could have gotten on 'quite well without them.'¹¹⁹ Commissars could even be targets – famously, Clydebank volunteer Barney Shields urinated in Wally Tapsell's boots one night, expressing his dislike for these 'non-combatant busybodies.' Shields was the model of a volunteer whose politics were instinctive rather than theoretical – in John Dunlop's words, he did not 'feel that he needed any political instruction on what he was there to do.'¹²⁰ Beyond Shields' apparent disdain for political operatives, his choice of receptacle was no accident. Many believed that Political Commissars received differential treatment – their boots in particular became a status symbol, a potent one given most volunteers' poor footwear.¹²¹ By sabotaging his boots, Shields was not merely taking petty revenge on Tapsell, but offering a pungent criticism of his office. Such 'criticism' highlighted discontent at the Party's

¹¹⁶ E.g. Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 245.

¹¹⁷ More broadly, see James Matthews, 'The Vanguard of Sacrifice'? Political Commissars in the Republican Popular Army during the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939', *War in History* 21:1 (2013), 82–101.

¹¹⁸ Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 272.

¹¹⁹ 'James Chalmers – Declaration', 2 September 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/114/14.

¹²⁰ Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 144.

¹²¹ Elizabeth Roberts, 'British and American Volunteers and the Politics of Dress and Demeanour in the Spanish Civil War', *Limina* 14 (2008), 59.

failure to live up to its own egalitarian ethos, another key plank of many volunteers' political attachment to the Party. That said, Tapsell understood that the Party risked alienating ordinary volunteers by privileging senior figures.

I remain firmly convinced that it would have a good healthy affect if a leading Communist shared the ordinary life of the boys as a soldier, and not have the position where such comrades occupied exclusively political roles, or leading military ones. It would be a healthy touch of democracy, which would help things along.¹²²

Such themes of fairness and democracy were often drawn upon in volunteer complaints, such as in Alec Marcovitch's critique of the differential conditions and treatment received by officers. While, as discussed further below, Marcovitch's testimony is problematic, this issue clearly animated him considerably.

They were sitting up there in this bloody HQ living like lords, they had a quartermaster, Walker his name was, a professional thief, organiser and manipulator, he used to go into the lorry in advance, get in touch with a colleague... before you said Bob's your uncle there was a whole stock of good wines, choice wines and all the rest of it, and they were living like nobody's business...

I'm all in favour that there should be a differential in the circumstances, but don't aggravate the differential. If you're having a wee bit extra don't throw it in other people's faces, don't make it so bloody obvious, you know, I mean people had it rough.¹²³

While similar complaints are likely universal in any army, they had particular resonance in this context. Communism presented itself as a doctrine of equality, so any real or perceived differential in treatment was not just a matter of irritation, but struck to the core of volunteers' ideological commitment. The importance of communist fairness is drawn upon in a letter co-written by Dundonian James Doyle to the authorities at Albacete while imprisoned by the Spanish police for desertion. Doyle and his English companion claimed that as communists, they had 'always fought against oppression', which they contrasted with the poor treatment they were receiving in prison, at times 'worse than we

¹²² Tapsell to Pollitt, nd, MML, Box C, File 13/1.

¹²³ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

receive in capitalist prisons where we expect vile treatment.' Both admitted their crimes, but claimed that while 'we deserve punishment', 'we also deserve fairness.'¹²⁴ Fairness was perceived to be so integral to communist identity that they judged it their best avenue of appeal in the circumstances, deliberately contrasting the supposed fairness of communism with the inequality they expected under capitalism, implicitly accusing the Party of failing to live up to its own standards.

Perhaps the most common complaints about differential treatment stemmed from the thorny issue of leave and repatriation. Senior communists were seen to be eluding restrictions that forced many volunteers to stay in Spain indefinitely.¹²⁵ Many volunteers had been promised repatriation after a certain period of service, often six months, and demands to return home multiplied from mid-1937 onwards.¹²⁶ George Aitken in particular struggled to cope with the volume of cases that needed 'fobbed off.'¹²⁷ The lack of repatriation opportunities was particularly egregious for the severely wounded. William Gilmour, for instance, became bitter about being forced to stay in Spain even after wounds left him unfit for further frontline service.

Every time there is a possibility of me getting home something always seems to happen, and I am left high and dry, and disappointed... The part that rubs me is the fact that men who have not got half the service in, as good service, are managing to get home with comparative ease.¹²⁸

Gilmour's complaint reflected the belief that while the rank-and-file languished in Spain, senior communists came and went much more freely. Baxell challenges this view, pointing out that the most famous such case, which saw many of the Battalion's leaders recalled to Britain to answer for poor leadership, was hardly a holiday for those involved.¹²⁹ Baxell is perhaps too generous here, however. However unpleasant the experience of being dressed down by Harry Pollitt, it is

¹²⁴ 'Note de Service no. 16428', 8 June 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/451/47.

¹²⁵ Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 247–50.

¹²⁶ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 138–9.

¹²⁷ 'Repatriation and Allowance Requests', [May 1937?], MML, Box 39, File A/12.

¹²⁸ Gilmour to Paterson, 20 March 1938, MML, Box 50, File G1/36.

¹²⁹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 139.

unlikely to rival the privations dealt with daily at the front, or the frustration felt by those languishing in Republican hospitals. The characterisation of their return in *Nuestro Combate* as a 'well-earned rest' likely did not appease those who justifiably felt that they also deserved a rest.¹³⁰

Beyond this infamous example, some communists seemed to face fewer obstacles in coming and going. Sydney Quinn was open about the strings pulled to get him home.

A certain comrade came to me, he says 'there's five of you going on a propaganda leave.' Well, I was never a propagandist but apparently we would never have got away if we just said you're going home, they had do something to satisfy the authorities. Now I wasn't running away, neither was the rest of them, but we thought we'd done our share.¹³¹

Robert Middleton, the brother of prominent Glaswegian communist George Middleton, also managed to obtain repatriation in slightly dubious circumstances. One account – which may have been unduly coloured by his subsequent falling out with the Party – claims he was sent home due to being drunk when sent to the front.¹³² Other sources indicate that he was wounded at the Battle of Jarama.¹³³ What appears to have formally sealed his permission to return home, however, were '*raisons de famille*' – his wife had died leaving three children requiring care. This, at least, was what had been told to the Commandant of the Albacete base, who supplied the necessary paperwork, but is not referenced at all in Middleton's own correspondence or biographical details, and did not impede Middleton's return to Spain in October.¹³⁴ It is difficult to avoid concluding that Middleton, who had connections with CPGB heavyweight Peter Kerrigan, was provided with an acceptable excuse to justify his leave in a similar fashion to Quinn.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ *Nuestro Combate*, 34 (October-November 1937), 4.

¹³¹ Sydney Quinn, TLS, MS, Tape 202.

¹³² 'MIDDLETON, Robert', [1938?], RGASPI, 545/6/173/19.

¹³³ Middleton to Kerrigan, 2 March 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/173/6.

¹³⁴ These details were laid out in a letter from the commandant authorising a cash advance to Middleton on his journey home, 21 April 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/173/20.

¹³⁵ See correspondence between Kerrigan and Middleton, RGASPI, 545/6/173/4-9.

Marcovitch is again outspoken on this question, claiming that individuals who had come out only briefly were going home and getting a 'big middle page article' in the *Daily Worker* 'about their experiences in the Spanish Civil War.'¹³⁶ Aside from the implied slight to those who had served for months without publicity, Marcovitch questioned why repatriation could be arranged for them and not those for whom 'if any compassion existed at all they should have been permitted.'¹³⁷ He was hardly the only one to complain about this phenomenon. William Benson, while not a Scot, offered a particularly pithy summary of such feelings.

Between them they sent young Barker back to the line, the one comrade who should have been sent back to England. He will probably get killed and nothing will be said about him, while hero's [sic] like Kerrigan, Springhall, Aitken and Copeman, will continue to be headliners in the DW. shit [original emphasis].¹³⁸

Both Benson and Marcovitch linked perceived inequities surrounding repatriation to unhappiness regarding Communist Party representations of the volunteers. While most allowed that propaganda about the British Battalion was necessary, they also felt frustration at how the spotlight lingered on senior communists and other prominent figures, especially if reporting did not conform to what they had experienced. Such rewards tended to accrue to communists in good political standing, often regardless of the nature of their service – Alec Donaldson, for instance, was singled out to receive a special signed message from La Pasionaria as reward for good service, despite never serving at the front and having in fact refused to do so when asked.¹³⁹ In another list of 'distinguished' figures in the XV Brigade, only one Briton, Scot George Murray, was not an officer or commissar – but he was the secretary of

¹³⁶ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

¹³⁷ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

¹³⁸ Benson to 'Jud', 18 March 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/105/103.

¹³⁹ 'Camaradas para recibir el mensaje de Pasionaria firmado', RGASPI, 545/6/39/146. For Donaldson's refusal to be transferred to the front, see 'DONALDSON Alec', RGASPI, 545/6/125/61.

the British Battalion's Party Committee.¹⁴⁰ While they may all have rendered outstanding service, such lists gave credence to the complaint that only a chosen few were receiving public glory for their actions.¹⁴¹

Whether or not these complaints stemmed from perception or reality, there is no doubt that some among the Battalion's leadership soon realised that they needed to be countered. Writing to Glasgow communist Thomas Anderson prior to the Battle of Brunete, Tapsell laid out the reasons why he was refused repatriation.

All leave outside Spain, all repatriation other than grounds of complete physical incompetence for any form of military service, is completely forbidden to Party members. Cunningham with 4 severe wounds, one bullet in his lung and his left arm stiff, leaves today to rejoin the battalion. McDade with more or less permanent paralysis of his left arm ditto.

Reason? There are plenty of lads with grave domestic problems, who have had severe but not incapacitating wounds, who would like either leave or repatriation... Under the circumstances Communists must be prepared to give a lead. Kerrigan and Springhall were ordered back for political work, but chaps here who are simply anxious to get home also want to do political work. I can appreciate and sympathise with your personal problems – the solution is to take your difficulty to your CO and get allocated some lighter job.¹⁴²

The issue, as put forward by the likes of Marcovitch and Benson, and implicitly allowed for in Tapsell's letter, was again one of fairness. Communism, in the eyes of the volunteers and beyond, was based on egalitarianism. Many of the Communist Party's most powerful critiques of British society were based on fairness, or rather the lack of it. These particular critiques were particularly powerful for working-class volunteers with ample direct experience of these problems. As such, by appearing to privilege certain members of the Battalion,

¹⁴⁰ 'List of distinguished comrades in the 15th Internationals', 23 October 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/452/78.

¹⁴¹ Concerns about equitable coverage were not exclusively aimed at high-ranking communists. Regarding press coverage in early 1937, for instance, Tapsell reported that volunteers 'rightly object to deserters and imposters being warmly welcomed and getting a public when they don't deserve it.' Tapsell to Pollitt, 25 April 1937, MML.

¹⁴² Tapsell to Anderson, nd, MML, Box 39, File A/14.

especially when those members were also senior communists, the leadership ran the risk of not just grumbling among ordinary volunteers, but challenging their very commitment to communism and its core values. Just as other events discussed above could test volunteers' faith in communist leadership, the fundamental question was whether the Party was what it claimed to be. Often, sometimes understandably, they could not live up to their own image, and the result was that many International Brigaders came to question their loyalties. Some left with their faith in the Party completely shattered, such as Thomas Mitchell of Edinburgh, whose 'general political attitude' was that 'Communism is a good thing' but 'individual communists almost without exception are no good', or John Paterson, who bemoaned 'the general contempt held by the bureaucrats for the rank and file in Spain.'¹⁴³

Tapsell's letter points to another side of this question, however. The Party was well aware that such perceptions mattered, and much of what was meant by 'political work' was not propaganda and rhetoric, but trying to show to volunteers how it was possible to reconcile the basis of their instinctive faith in communism with what the Party was doing in Spain. Sometimes, it worked. Even in the camp at San Pedro, Gary McCartney reported that through paying 'attention to weak elements', 'several greatly improved.'¹⁴⁴ Such formulations point to the significant emotional labour undertaken in supporting demoralised volunteers. Bill Paynter, for instance, swiftly became exhausted by this work, writing to his superiors about the 'nerve racking' work of 'being kind and persuasive hour after hour day after day.'¹⁴⁵ Paynter was not exceptional: this expectation was at the heart of the 'ideal' Political Commissar, lionised as a tireless worker who supported his charges not just politically, but spiritually and practically.¹⁴⁶ While such representations are propagandistic, they are

¹⁴³ Paterson to Murray, 12 May 1939, NLS, TMP, Box 4, File 4.

¹⁴⁴ 'Report from San Pedro', 7.

¹⁴⁵ 'Repatriation and Allowance Requests', MML.

¹⁴⁶ There are numerous documents detailing the role of the Political Commissar in the International Brigades, but the most revealing in this context is 'The Task of the Political Commissar in the Army', RGASPI, 545/3/445/12-19. While this tract presents an idealised vision, it is striking just how much space is given to describing emotional labour.

nonetheless important, presenting a model of behaviour and action that shaped how commissars approached their jobs, aimed not just at engendering trust for this alien figure, but guidelines for the commissars themselves. This meant that low morale, and with it disappointment in communist leadership, could be improved by changing circumstances and practical efforts to solve problems. Such cases are a reminder that even when talking about issues such as political disaffection, the International Brigades rarely provide a convenient binary.

Desertion, Dissent and Repression

The question of repression is one that has continued to excite historians of the International Brigades, with longstanding debates surrounding how its leaders responded to military and especially political ‘failings’.¹⁴⁷ More than anything else, this debate is fuelled by the International Brigades’ implicit claim to exceptionalism. The participants invariably described themselves as volunteers, and they accordingly presented discipline as a function of political will and dedication to the cause. Any existence or appearance of repression, therefore, appears to give the lie to such claims – if these were pure volunteers for liberty, then why were such mechanisms necessary? If even a few volunteers were shot for desertion or their political beliefs, then some critics hold that the entire project was tarnished and failed to live up to its ideals.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ In a British context, Richard Baxell is the most effective voice defending the International Brigades’ legacy, especially Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 130-49. Baxell is effective because he attempts to confront and contextualise accusations rather than minimise or ignore them, as in Bill Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty* (London, 1982). In a Scottish context, Gray adds little interpretive detail beyond identifying some Scottish participants, Daniel Gray, *Homage to Caledonia* (Edinburgh, 2008), 191-8. Key revisionist texts come from Robert Stradling, who has tried to challenge the historical memory of the International Brigades in Britain, particularly with regard to the impact of communist political cultures. Stradling, ‘English-Speaking Units’, esp. 744-8. Also relevant here is Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, esp. 258-313. Difficulties in discussing questions of repression and political dissent go well beyond Britain – even otherwise excellent accounts often tend towards sensationalism, e.g. Michael Petrou, *Renegades* (Vancouver, 2008), 113-14.

¹⁴⁸ Aside from texts cited above, see Robert Stradling, *History and Legend: Writing the International Brigades* (Cardiff, 2003). More broadly, Payne, *The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism*; Klehr, Haynes and Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism*

This is a problematic yardstick by which to judge the International Brigades. For one, as has already been discussed, iron discipline and self-sacrifice were integral to the Communist Party's identity, apparent to communists and non-communists alike. No Party member should have been surprised that discipline was expected and enforced in Spain, as it was in all Party spheres.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, such expectations are hardly realistic. Remi Skoutelsky aptly quotes Trotsky, pointing out that no army can exist without repression, and the International Brigades were no different.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, many of the disciplinary measures discussed here would be unremarkable in many militaries of the time. What is different is the International Brigades' exceptional nature, composed of volunteers motivated by a positive political vision of their struggle, explicitly eschewing traditional military discipline.¹⁵¹ The goal of this section is to explore what this meant in practice. Did an inevitable need to enforce orders translate into a system designed to identify and punish those who did not measure up to communist expectations of military or political discipline? To what extent did such efforts dehumanise transgressors and decontextualise their crimes? Did punishment become disproportionate or stop serving any reasonable purpose beyond terror and liquidation? While there can never be a single, 'correct' opinion on such questions, this section aims to better establish the effects of repression on its victims, and where possible understand the causes for the treatment they received.

Of the Scots who clashed with authority in Spain, Alec Marcovitch has proven the most controversial. Marcovitch was a rare Jewish communist in Scotland, hailing from the Gorbals district of Glasgow. He had a long history in the Party, joining the YCL at fifteen and soon becoming renowned as a street orator. He had also clashed with the leadership on questions of Soviet anti-Semitism – not

(New Haven, 1995); Radosh et al, *Spain Betrayed*; Richardson, *Comintern Army*; Pedro Corral, *Desertores: La Guerra Civil que nadie quiere contra* (Barcelona, 2006), 457–519.

¹⁴⁹ Linehan, *Communism in Britain*, 83–108.

¹⁵⁰ Skoutelsky provides a useful and even-handed assessment of political repression. Skoutelsky, *Novedad*, 339–44, 352.

¹⁵¹ Michael Alpert, *The Republican Army in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (Cambridge, 2013), 158–9.

just in registering his own disagreement with the Party line, but trying to mobilise others to oppose it.¹⁵² This incident foreshadowed conflict between Marcovitch and Battalion authorities in Spain, which saw Marcovitch targeted for disruptive political activities. Although overlooked by historians during the Cold War, James Hopkins rediscovered Marcovitch's case and used it as the centrepiece of his condemnation of the British Battalion's political cultures. Hopkins combined Marcovitch's testimony, given in an extensive interview in 1977, with personnel records held in Moscow to paint a dark picture of the fate of dissenters in the British Battalion.¹⁵³

While Hopkins' narrative does not rest solely upon Marcovitch's testimony, it is nonetheless crucial to his argument, as Marcovitch was one of the only dissenters to be interviewed. His case is used to confirm the worst possible interpretations of the International Brigades' political culture, showing that the Stalinist ways of thinking of the leadership translated to a repressive and dangerous atmosphere for non-conformers more generally.

Marcovitch's story is important because, as the Moscow archives of the International Brigade reveal, there were many like him who became disaffected, often deserted, and were conveniently summarized as being 'demoralised' or 'undisciplined' or inactive'... Marcovitch would have agreed with John McGovern, the ILP leader, who predicted in 1937 that communism would still the tongues, shackle the limbs, and mold the robot minds in every militant fighter throughout the world.'¹⁵⁴

Yet Hopkins' use of Marcovitch's testimony in this way is problematic. To assume that Marcovitch agreed with McGovern's critique is a stretch, especially as Marcovitch himself rejoined the Communist Party during the Second World War and voiced considerable contempt for the ILP.¹⁵⁵ More fundamentally, it homogenises the experiences of others who deserted or became demoralised. While, as already discussed, it is wrong to depoliticise such individuals completely, they also do not conform to the picture of 'dissent' painted by

¹⁵² Marcovitch, Tape 182.

¹⁵³ Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 258–64.

¹⁵⁴ Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 264.

¹⁵⁵ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

Hopkins, which ignores the extent that such disaffection was rarely absolute. Marcovitch, as shall become clear, was very much an outlier.

Aside from the question of whether Marcovitch's experiences were at all typical, his testimony needs to be treated much more critically than Hopkins allows. Marcovitch's list of grievances do not tally with his file, which claims that he asserted the volunteers' collective right to repatriation that was being stymied by Brigade leadership.¹⁵⁶ While the 'official' version should not be trusted unconditionally, such discrepancies are grounds for wariness. Moreover, some of the factual statements Marcovitch made appear unusual, particularly his claim that he was sent to a commando unit charged with infiltrating enemy lines, destroying 'outposts', getting 'prisoners back' and 'kill[ing] people.' These claims present a particular interpretative challenge. Republican guerrillas, under the auspices of XIV Corps, were active at this time and place, carrying out scouting missions.¹⁵⁷ However, the notion that he would have been trusted – immediately and without training – to undertake secret missions behind enemy lines is jarring, and implausible given that he was viewed with such suspicion.¹⁵⁸ It seems plausible that Marcovitch may have been drawing on accounts found in later literary and historical descriptions of the war that were published well before Marcovitch's testimony was given.¹⁵⁹ Crucially, despite Hopkins' implications Marcovitch's tale cannot be verified in International Brigade records. In fact, these records contradict Marcovitch's account, placing him in Brigade prison and a disciplinary labour company during the weeks prior to the Ebro offensive, when he claimed to be undertaking secret operations.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Alan Gilchrist's statement, which is especially notable as Hopkins allowed that Gilchrist was more even-handed than other commissars. 'Marcowich, Alex', RGASPI, 545/6/168/13; Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 261–2.

¹⁵⁷ Alpert, *The Republican Army*, 265–7.

¹⁵⁸ Marcovitch, Tape 182. Most accounts touching on guerrilla activity undertaken by international volunteers focus on 1937, such as Skoutelsky, *Novedad*, 228–30.

¹⁵⁹ Accounts of guerilla activity appeared very shortly after the war's end, e.g. Tom Wintringham, *New Ways of War* (London, 1940). It is certainly plausible, although there is no direct evidence, that Marcovitch also drew on depictions in the more famous works of Orwell and Hemingway.

¹⁶⁰ See especially Marcovitch's own declaration, 3 September 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/168/11.

Interestingly, there may be another version of Marcovitch's story available from an unlikely source. Ralph Glasser's autobiography contains an intriguing section on his influences growing up during the 1930s in Glasgow, including his friendship with a young communist agitator, 'Bernard Lipchinsky'. Lipchinsky's description fits Marcovitch neatly – a young, talented orator, famous locally for his speeches and a member of the Gorbals Jewish community.¹⁶¹ Although impossible to prove definitively, it is very likely that Lipchinsky was an anonymised version of Marcovitch, and Glasser was recounting the story told to him by a childhood friend. If so, the similarities and divergences between these two versions of Marcovitch's tale are telling. Both are thematically similar – covering political enthusiasm, disillusionment with petty corruption of higher-ranking officials, and persecution for unclear and unexplained reasons.

However, the details of each are wildly different. While Marcovitch cast himself as a guerrilla fighter in his testimony, here he is a 'mind policeman', who frets at his dirty deeds and the 'lads [who] would never get back across the water because of me.'¹⁶² Eventually, he himself is targeted for 'removal' at the hands of a former comrade, whose ambush he escapes and he manages to shoot in self-defence.¹⁶³ As with the claim to have joined a secret guerrilla unit, this narrative lacks plausibility. As has been convincingly demonstrated, very few British volunteers were executed for political or other offences.¹⁶⁴ While several volunteers worked with the SIM, none described anything like the atmosphere indicated in Glasser's account.¹⁶⁵ Like the guerrilla narrative, this story is self-serving, painting Marcovitch as a heroic, dashing figure despite his persecution. Marcovitch's apparent embellishments might be best understood as a reaction

¹⁶¹ Occupation (cutter) and age (a few years older than Glasser himself) also match closely. Ralph Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals* (London, 1997), 34. As discussed in Chapter One, few, if any, other Gorbals Jews fought in Spain, and there was certainly no 'Lipchinsky'. 'Marcovitch' itself was not a pseudonym, as his father wrote to the Foreign Office under that name. Marcovitch to Lord Halifax, 29 January 1939, TNA, FO 371/24122/223–4.

¹⁶² Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals*, 115.

¹⁶³ Glasser, *Growing up in the Gorbals*, 116–17.

¹⁶⁴ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 140–3. This is contended by Pedro Corral, who claims it was more frequent than imagined, but is unable to point to concrete examples. Corral, *Desertores*, 487–8.

¹⁶⁵ Tellingly, such accusations are absent from Fraser, *The Truth*.

to what he anticipated being his starring role in life becoming an essentially dull, unheroic experience. The most likely version, born out by International Brigade records, is that he was sent to a labour camp prior to the Ebro offensive, was briefly released back to the Battalion during the offensive, before being imprisoned once more, this time in a Republican jail.¹⁶⁶ In other words, while Marcovitch's oral account was accurate in a broad sense, he invented or exaggerated some key details.

Marcovitch's fall from grace can still shed light on how political non-conformity was handled within the British Battalion. His case confirms the observation that fluency in Stalinist modes of communication were vital for volunteers who sought to be part of any substantive discussion about the International Brigades themselves. Marcovitch, by both his own and his superiors' accounts, did not conform to either the expected language or conventions required to successfully and safely communicate internal criticism. While Marcovitch clearly understood the precepts of democratic centralism – he recognised political meetings as an appropriate space to voice criticisms – he appeared to have a weaker grasp of how Stalinist norms operated in practice.¹⁶⁷ Marcovitch was simply not constructive – his key 'failing' was not framing his criticisms in a way in which their solution could be understood as reinforcing rather than disputing the Party line. His public, self-admittedly 'impetuous' complaints also mitigated against their being downplayed by his superiors.

Marcovitch's troubles also point to the continued importance of the various communist networks discussed in Chapter Three. He, by his own account, saw himself as an outsider in both Spain and Glasgow, cultivating 'grassroots' connections ahead of relationships with more senior or influential figures, several of whom he mentioned falling out with.¹⁶⁸ Strikingly, Marcovitch's

¹⁶⁶ RGASPI, 545/6/168/5–15.

¹⁶⁷ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

¹⁶⁸ Hopkins claims Marcovitch was adamant that his previous disagreements with Peter Kerrigan had led to his ill-treatment. Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 263–4. This is a curious reading of Marcovitch's testimony – the interviewer himself asked whether Kerrigan was behind things, and Marcovitch conceded it was possible. Marcovitch, Tape 182. According to

testimony never touches on friendship – even the ‘grassroots’ figures he speaks of were faceless and anonymous, evoking a crowd that he felt he could influence, but not individuals with whom he connected. This suggests that Marcovitch understood the Party as a political space, but did not grasp the social bonds that underpinned the politics. Without friends in good standing who could speak for him and vouch for his benign intentions, it was much more likely that others would assume the worst. Put another way, Marcovitch, despite his apparent brilliance as a political orator, was a difficult character. This, as it would in many organisations, made him a much easier and likelier target for official displeasure. This is not to say that he deserved the consequences, rather that it is difficult to imagine an individual more likely to face the ire of the International Brigades’ political establishment.

Marcovitch’s experiences also show the limits of arguments that paint political repression in the International Brigades as a well-oiled and practised system. His testimony paints a picture of small-scale and confused efforts. His punishments, particularly if his more outlandish stories are discounted, reflected the most common fates of ‘serious’ offenders: time spent in labour companies, correction camps and Republican jails, with little logic to where he was sent or for how long. However, judging by his fellow prisoners, even without the secret missions Marcovitch’s experience of the camps was not entirely typical.

There wasn’t a deserter amongst us... they were all men of integrity, all men of profound political conscience all men with background in revolutionary movement, illegally in some cases and in my own case from my limited membership of the party here. I thought to myself well there’s something bloody fishy I mean the seeds of discontent can’t be as narrow and exclusive.¹⁶⁹

Cooney’s unashamed testimony, he and Bill Rust orchestrated Marcovitch’s persecution. Cooney, IWMSA, Tape 804/5.

¹⁶⁹ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

Hopkins uses Marcovitch's description of these correction camps as proof that there was an extensive system that handled large numbers of dissidents.¹⁷⁰ This assertion is undermined by Marcovitch's own observations – he noted that the camp held a population of just thirty, of varying nationalities and including no other Britons.¹⁷¹ The presence of so many nationalities strongly suggests that this was a clearing-house for 'serious' political dissidents from the entire International Brigades. This, while hardly an inconsequential number, is far different to that implied in revisionist accounts. Hopkins contends that this was only one camp of many, but while he is correct in noting the existence of multiple camps, he appears to be conflating the different purposes such camps might serve. Some housed those who committed non-political crimes, such as James Queen, who was sentenced to four months in a labour camp for attempted rape.¹⁷² Charles McCormick's punishment was the cumulative result of drunkenness, racist statements about the Irish and abusing a superior officer.¹⁷³ Most commonly, these camps housed deserters. It is useful to contrast Marcovitch's description of his small camp – explicitly noted to not house any deserters – with that of Sydney Quinn, who stayed in a larger camp for deserters while he himself was awaiting repatriation. After witnessing a group of French internees being cajoled to return to the line, Quinn recalled his friend's observations.

Tom Clark says, 'these bastards'll be back again, watch this' so we waited and sure enough two or three hours later they come back one by one... I don't know what happened to them but they must have been repatriated because they were no use to anyone.¹⁷⁴

The purpose of this camp, likely Camp Lukacs itself, was dealing with the numerous volunteers whose traumatic service had left them unwilling to return to the line. Their existence presented the International Brigades leadership with a quandary – if they were sent home, it could be interpreted as rewarding and

¹⁷⁰ Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 262–4.

¹⁷¹ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

¹⁷² QUEEN, James, RGASPI, 545/6/189/3–10.

¹⁷³ 'McCORMICK, Charles', RGASPI, 545/6/166/73.

¹⁷⁴ Quinn, Tape 202.

thereby encouraging desertion.¹⁷⁵ As such, it became standard practice to attempt to redeem and re-motivate deserters, and try to elicit useful work or even frontline service.¹⁷⁶ This puts such camps in a quite different category to that described by Marcovitch. While disaffection and demoralisation were not apolitical phenomena, they also cannot be read as wholesale rejection of the International Brigades and their purpose.

Marcovitch's further claim that the intent of his punishment was 'the elimination of people who were politically contentious' also requires examination. The idea that 'inconvenient' individuals were put into situations where their death was all but guaranteed, in lieu of carrying out an unpalatable death sentence, has been put forward elsewhere. Richard Baxell identifies two volunteers that he believed met such a fate, including Greenock volunteer Pat Glacken.¹⁷⁷ Glacken was condemned to death for attempting to desert to enemy lines in January 1938, but the sentence was reduced due to his remorse and youth, both common grounds for commutation.¹⁷⁸ Glacken was killed just days later, allegedly because he was placed in a position in which he was 'virtually certain to be killed.'¹⁷⁹ If this was deliberate, it is unclear why. Glacken was given a highly-public chance at redemption – his commuted sentence and the logic behind it was published as a Special Order to the entire 35th Division.

¹⁷⁵ E.g. Paynter to Pollitt, 20 July 1937, MML, Box C, File 15/3.

¹⁷⁶ The policy was that an 'attempt should be made in all cases' to rehabilitate deserters. 'Notes for Report', 21 November 1937, MML, Box C, File 19/8.

¹⁷⁷ The other was Bert Overton, a disastrously incompetent English officer. It is plausible that Overton was indeed 'gotten rid of.' Yet the underlying evidence is strange. Hopkins made only a short, unsourced claim that 'some wondered' if getting Overton killed was an 'expedient' method of removing a 'dangerous embarrassment.' Baxell quotes this passage, but does not clarify that it was unsourced, attributing the words to 'several brigaders', while others have quoted Baxell, in Ben Hughes' case muddying the waters further by claiming these were the words of 'one veteran' who 'openly admitted' the foul play. While there may be a primary source underpinning this chain of references, it is not clear what. Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 268; Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 80; Hughes, *They Shall Not Pass!*, 182.

¹⁷⁸ Hopkins suggests that there were irregularities surrounding Glacken's trial, referring to a protest lodged by Wally Tapsell. Tapsell was actually protesting a different matter: Glacken had belatedly received permission for repatriation. Tapsell was protesting that such a decision was made by 'military or political authorities [not] intimately in contact with individuals', as he knew that Glacken had 'no valid reason' for repatriation. Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 268; 'Patrick Glacken', 26 February 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/140/3-6.

¹⁷⁹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 141.

As to the Corporal Patrick Glacken, considering the service he has previously rendered, the sincerity with which he admitted his crime, and the plea that he be given the opportunity to atone for his failing... I order that the death penalty be commuted to demotion... and atoning for his crime by means of loyal service and work.¹⁸⁰

This stress on atonement through service was a common formulation, and given the broader emphasis on rehabilitation there is little reason to assume these orders were euphemistic. There are few other cases where the death of a Scottish volunteer appears deliberate.¹⁸¹ One candidate is Glaswegian William Meeke, whose case Hopkins noted as suspicious as he was 'shot whilst attempting to escape prison.'¹⁸² As Baxell notes, however, Foreign Office records indicate that he turned up in a camp in France considerably later, and Security Service surveillance confirmed his eventual repatriation in February 1939.¹⁸³ His International Brigade file reveals further detail apparently missed by Hopkins. He was shot during an incident in which other prisoners attempted to escape – a ricochet off a wall struck him near the left ear – but he survived and was sent to hospital.¹⁸⁴

The overall picture does not suggest that there was any deliberate policy of trying to dispose of troublesome volunteers by deliberately placing them in harm's way. Even exceptionally awkward individuals, such as pseudo-Scottish actor James Justice, who mismanaged the base at Madrigueras and was found to

¹⁸⁰ Orden Especial del Dia, 11 January 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/4/103.

¹⁸¹ Another semi-mysterious case is James Donald, who was caught deserting alongside Malcolm Sneddon. They were imprisoned together, but Donald was transferred to Madrid for 'interrogation' in May 1937. Baxell argues that the official claim that Donald died at Belchite was impossible, as he was still in prison. However, other evidence suggests that he was returned to the British Battalion and assigned to a rearguard labour company at Tarazona in late 1937. He was likely drafted back into a frontline unit and killed during the Aragon crisis. His hometown acquaintance, Hugh Sloan, mentioned witnessing his death in March 1938. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 143; Sloan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 236; Malcolm Sneddon to British Consul (Valencia), 28 May 1937, TNA, FO 889/2/38; 'English in Spain' [November 1937?], RGASPI, 545/6/89/50; 'Relacion de combatientes hechos prisioneros', 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/98/4.

¹⁸² Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire*, 268. Original quote is from 'MEEKE, WM', 17 October 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/172/6. Meeke is listed as Irish in several sources, but the bulk of primary material has him born and living in Glasgow.

¹⁸³ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 198n. This is confirmed by Security Service records, 'MEEKE, William', KV 5/127.

¹⁸⁴ 'William Meeke', 4 July 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/172/4.

be addicted to morphine, were generally expelled from Spain rather than 'gotten rid of.'¹⁸⁵ The gulf between the extremes of Stalinist repression and what the British Battalion was willing to countenance is also highlighted in a June 1937 incident, where Scottish officer William Meredith called for 'drastic action' against volunteers who were found drunk in action, as an 'example to the rest of the Battalion.' 'Drastic' punishment turned out to mean ten days in a labour company, and five days pay stopped.¹⁸⁶ Fining volunteers, according to Marcovitch, 'meant nothing because you couldn't even use [money] as toilet paper.'¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, the British Battalion and XV Brigade often evidenced a desire to keep judicial procedures – and harsher punishments – away from outside authorities. In one report on the conditions faced by internationals in Spanish prison, Paul Somogyi argued that such cases should be kept away from Spanish authorities, as he did not 'think that Spanish judges would show much understanding for the special problems and mentality of English speaking people.'¹⁸⁸ In particular, several sources are adamant that executions were vigorously opposed, including George Aitken, who claimed to have resisted suggestions from his superiors that the British 'execute a few' deserters, pointing to the 'catastrophic' reaction that such news would engender 'if it ever got back to Britain.'¹⁸⁹

The potential reaction in Britain was often raised when it came to the treatment of transgressors. In an interesting reversal, one volunteer coming to the end of a prison sentence wrote to Aitken in May 1937 with a subtle threat: approve his request for repatriation, or his wife might get 'worried over my position and [seek] other methods to get me home.'¹⁹⁰ In the context, there is little doubt that this was a threat to go to the press, albeit couched in the language of loyalty to the Party and professing inability to stop his wife acting of her own accord. In other cases, the CPGB itself raised the issue with Spanish counterparts. One

¹⁸⁵ 'JUSTICE James', n.d., RGASPI, 545/6/156/19.

¹⁸⁶ Meredith to Copeman, 11 June 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/451/49.

¹⁸⁷ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

¹⁸⁸ Paul Somogyi, 'General Remarks', [1937?], RGASPI, 545/3/451/159.

¹⁸⁹ Aitken, quoted in Cook, *Apprentices*, 82–3.

¹⁹⁰ James to Aitken, 31 May 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/444/10-11.

letter to the PCE made the case in November 1938 that prisoners should be repatriated along with the rest of the volunteers. It claimed that while those who had committed military offenses would 'receive very little sympathy in this country' and that their interest was 'by no means due to any concern with the men themselves', there was a danger of 'embittered' relatives who might 'exploit a grievance', as well as 'anti-Republican influences' who would 'make propaganda' out of the situation.¹⁹¹ This careful wording was doubtless intended to pre-empt any accusation that the CPGB was unwilling to approach such matters with the discipline required of true Bolsheviks. Whether motivated by pragmatism or humanitarianism, it is clear that opinion at home was of considerable concern to the CPGB, and limited their willingness to take Stalinist practices to their extreme.

These conclusions are borne out by the actual fates of deserters. Of more than ninety Scots that deserted or attempted to desert, just seven later died of any causes, compared to over a quarter of non-deserters.¹⁹² This suggests that committing crimes actually made volunteers safer, rather than leading to their deliberate exposure to danger, especially as most of these seven did not perish during their punishment assignments. International Brigade labour companies, unlike the infamous Soviet penal units, were not simply used as expendable manpower, and it is possible that historians have been overly keen to read later Soviet euphemisms into International Brigade terminology. What seems more likely is that labour battalions were just that – an effort to get useful work out of defaulters, either as temporary punishment or as an acknowledgement that further front service was unlikely. Casual references to such units tend to support this interpretation, such as an October 1937 letter from Mick Economides to Bill Paynter, which mentioned that 'rotters and other weak types [had been] put together in a special section which does odd jobs in the base.'¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ CPGB to PCE Secretariat, 17 November 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/87/27. A similar 'line' was proposed in another case. Kerrigan to Pollitt, 13 August 1938, MML, Box C, File 24/6.

¹⁹² Just 21 Scottish deserters were fully successful in escaping Spain, meaning those who were caught (and presumably punished) were still thrice as likely to survive as non-deserters.

¹⁹³ Economides to Paynter, 14 October 1937, RGASPI, 545/2/256/376.

While a few may have died while serving in these units, deaths were much more uncommon than in combat units, and were likely the result of exposure to indirect dangers behind the lines such as bombing or artillery fire.

While execution may have been rare, that is not to say that this system succeeded in ensuring fair and consistent punishment of transgressions. It is useful to return again to Marcovitch's experiences in Republican prisons. The prison he found himself confined in for the final months of the war, Castelldefels, was a relatively common destination for XV Brigade offenders in 1938.¹⁹⁴ As with other camps, not all of these prisoners were victims of political repression. There were two other Scots imprisoned alongside Marcovitch in January 1939, Thomas Dickson and James Queen, neither of whom could be classified as political prisoners. Queen's crimes have been discussed above, while Dickson was a deserter, albeit an unusual one. Declared unfit by a medical commission in November 1937, he deserted and obtained passage on a British ship leaving Spain. However, he returned to Spain in December, attempting to sell contraband cigarettes. He was arrested, and apparently drifted through the Republican justice system, with his expulsion from Republican territory proposed in March 1938, confirmed that June, but never carried out before transfer to Castelldefels in December.¹⁹⁵

Although Dickson's record in Spain bears little resemblance to Marcovitch's, his experience of the Republican justice system did. For both, the experience of jail was one of inherent confusion, with the prevailing attitude seeming to be that if an individual was incarcerated, then they should stay that way, even if the original reasons were unclear. Marcovitch noted that 'the man who was in

¹⁹⁴ From mid-1938 until February 1939, there seem to have consistently been about a half-dozen British prisoners at Castelldefells. 'Relacion de Ingleses y Irlandeses Existentes en el Campo de Castelldefells', 1 September 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/89/25; 'Prisioneros Castelldefells', 4 January 1939, RGASPI, 545/3/451/34. Stradling paints Castelldefels as a 'fate arguably worse than death', 'the sordid satellite of Moscow's Lubyanka prison', where volunteers were routinely intimidated, interrogated and tortured. This is overstating the case – even Marcovitch, among the 'worst' of the English-speaking prisoners, recalled that political inmates were treated better than criminals, and that he was afforded a 'fair measure of liberty.' Marcovitch, Tape 182; Stradling, 'English-speaking Units', 763–4.

¹⁹⁵ 'Dickson, Thomas', RGASPI, 545/6/124/16–29.

command of that particular place hadn't the foggiest idea why we were there' – Dickson might have said the same, given that the Spanish Government had already decided to expel him from their territory but he remained in prison nearly a year later.¹⁹⁶ In another case, James Fisher of Renfrew was on the list of those at Castelldefels in September 1938, having arrived in March. Under 'Category', however, officials had only been able to write '?'.¹⁹⁷ Fisher was a serial deserter – on four separate occasions, according to one report – and it is unsurprising that he was imprisoned.¹⁹⁸ That he had been left languishing for six months without reason or redress, however, was typical of the Republican justice system, as another letter in 1937 makes clear.

The prison authorities state that [the English comrades] are being held there at the request of the Minister of National Defence, but they do not know on what charges. From the statements of all the prisoners it appears that they are deserters but have committed no other crime. Some of the prisoners have been in prison for five months.¹⁹⁹

Nor was such treatment limited to criminals – John Travers was mistakenly arrested en route to repatriation and imprisoned in Castelldefels for six weeks, with even the SIM not knowing the charge.²⁰⁰ This sort of Kafkaesque experience of the prison system likely had several underlying causes. In part, it reflected problems within the Republic itself, which during the war developed a considerable internal security apparatus, and indefinite incarceration without charge was not uncommon.²⁰¹ This was compounded by their status as foreigners. The language barriers, unfamiliarity with Spanish bureaucracy and likelihood that these individuals were *persona non grata* in the International Brigades meant that they were ill-placed to seek any kind of redress within the prison system. The infamous case of Scot Bob Smillie – who had fought

¹⁹⁶ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

¹⁹⁷ Relacion de Ingleses y Irlandeses Existentes en el Campo de Castelldefels', 1 September 1938,.

¹⁹⁸ 'FISHER, James', RGASPI, 545/6/133/35-9.

¹⁹⁹ 'Malos', RGASPI, 545/3/451/151.

²⁰⁰ 'Declaracion', 16 June 1938, RGASPI, 545/6/208/78.

²⁰¹ For an account of the Republican penal system during the war, see Javier Cervera, *Violencia política y acción clandestina: La retaguardia de Madrid en Guerra (1936-1939)* (PhD Thesis: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1996), 732-824.

alongside Orwell in the POUM militia and was detained following the unrest in Barcelona in May 1937 – reflects the dangers of imprisonment for international volunteers. Smillie, who apparently contracted appendicitis and died before adequate medical care was forthcoming, was the best-known victim of a prison bureaucracy that viewed international inmates as an annoyance best ignored. While various conspiracy theories surrounding Smillie's death are unconvincing, the systemic neglect evidenced in his case is a familiar story for international prisoners of the Republic.²⁰²

The issues faced by foreign prisoners in Republican jails is one factor among several that points to the need for a more complex understanding of desertion and its consequences. Robert Stradling, who lingers on the phenomenon, takes an absolute approach, arguing that desertion was considered a universally heinous crime for which 'quasi-homicidal hatred' was induced among the volunteers.²⁰³ This paints the number of British deserters – given as 367 by Stradling but potentially higher – as a catastrophic figure indicative of severe morale and organisational failings.²⁰⁴ Yet the testimony of volunteers themselves, and the administrative approach taken by the International Brigades, indicates that desertion occurred on a broad spectrum. Leaving the line in the heat of battle was viewed leniently, with an initial emphasis on the individual returning to their unit voluntarily. Such deserters rarely attempted to escape Spain altogether, rather they sought to remove themselves from immediate danger. The numbers of such deserters could run into the dozens in major battles – after the Battle of Teruel, for example, a list of forty desertion cases handled over the previous two months was composed, along with a note that they had actually 'handled two or three times as many', with the 'majority'

²⁰² Smillie's case is described in depth in Tom Buchanan, 'The Death of Bob Smillie, the Spanish Civil War and the Eclipse of the Independent Labour Party', *The Historical Journal* 40:2 (1997), 435–61. See also Gray, *Homage*, 155–66.

²⁰³ Stradling, 'English-Speaking Units', 757.

²⁰⁴ I am grateful to Professor Stradling for providing a sourced list of British desertion cases. While some few cases appear to be mistakes, the vast bulk are not, and help confirm that there were approximately 350-400 desertions, 90-100 of whom were Scots. Stradling, 'English-Speaking Units', 757n.

simply being 'sent back to the front.'²⁰⁵ Similarly long lists of 'minor' desertion cases were composed during the Battle of Brunete.²⁰⁶ It is clear that even during the worst cases of mass desertion, the official view was relatively lenient, as a report to CPGB leader Harry Pollitt makes clear.

I have had difficult experiences at the Base but never so difficult as in the last week or so. The toll of desertion has been heavy. We have over twenty in Albacete, and informed that there are more in Madrid and Valencia...

The whole problem is being treated with greatest possible degree of humanity, which in some cases is being abused by the defaulters. To repatriate them would be an injustice to the men still at the front and an encouragement to defaulting...

The men who have come to us have all been in Spain for more than six months. Almost without exception they have served at Jarama since the 12th Feb. Many have been once wounded. All are exhausted and in bad nervous condition. Many of them have excellent records. Their past records prove they are not just cowards.²⁰⁷

Even rearguard officials never lost sympathy for those who deserted, although there was a distinction made between those in 'bad nervous condition' and 'defaulters.'²⁰⁸ H. O. Knester's report on Scots James Donald and Malcom Snedden's desertion at Jarama concluded that he could not 'really blame them' for fleeing in the circumstances.²⁰⁹ Other 'desertion' cases could be petty – Tom Clarke, a Dundonian with a solid record, was accused by Fred Copeman of desertion due to a mix-up in orders which saw Clarke take a lorry to a village ahead of the main body of the Battalion. Needless to say, the incident was 'smoothed out' and Clarke faced neither punishment nor a bad evaluation.²¹⁰ This all suggests that Stradling's headline figure is worse than it looks, with

²⁰⁵ 'Report on the cases we have handled', 6 February 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/451/91.

²⁰⁶ Unsigned report, 28 July 1937, MML, Box 39, File A/26.

²⁰⁷ Paynter to Pollitt, 20 July 1937, MML.

²⁰⁸ This could be reflected in ordinary volunteers' views, e.g. Gilmour to Paterson, 5 April 1938, MML.

²⁰⁹ Knester, 'Report on deserters, Donald and Sneddon', MML.

²¹⁰ Clarke in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 61, 66; CLARKE Thomas Garrow, RGASPI, 545/6/115/43–4.

relatively few desertion cases being serious or successful attempts to escape the Battalion.²¹¹

The only Scot actually executed in Spain, Glacken's companion Allan Kemp, confirms rather than challenges the conclusion that desertion was understood differentially. Kemp and Glacken had attempted to desert to Nationalist lines, allegedly with information about the Battalion's dispositions that would aid the enemy.²¹² While both were sentenced to death for this crime, according to several accounts Kemp's age and superior rank led to the view that he was the ringleader and had persuaded Glacken to go along with his scheme. This incident was highly unusual – unlike Spanish troops, foreign volunteers almost exclusively deserted to the rear rather than to the enemy.²¹³ Bob Cooney pointed to this in justifying the sentence – the punishment was 'not for desertion', but 'because in order to carry out his desertion he was prepared to betray the lives of his comrades.'²¹⁴ Aside from explaining the harsh punishment, this difference makes it difficult to portray the decision as a product of Stalinist cultures.²¹⁵ This was betrayal and treason in any understanding, and Kemp would likely have received the same sentence in any contemporary military.

Even short of execution, the worst punishments were reserved for those willing to harm their comrades – including Kemp, or three American volunteers who attempted to steal an ambulance in order to make their escape.²¹⁶ The public trial and sentencing of these Americans, among a group of twelve English-speaking volunteers tried for desertion, is another example of the differential treatment of deserters, with punishments ranging from death to just a month in

²¹¹ The same point can be made about Pedro Corral's estimate of '5,000' international deserters. Corral, *Desertores*, 458.

²¹² Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 140-1.

²¹³ 'Actividades del día', 18 September 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/435/167.

²¹⁴ Cooney, quoted in Corkhill and Rawnsley, *The Road to Spain: Anti Fascists at War 1936-1939* (Dunfermline, 1987), 121.

²¹⁵ Baxell cites an article in *Nuestro Combate* referring to a meeting that voiced 'complete approval' of the sentences, indicating that Stalinist norms were not entirely absent. However, I have been unable to locate the cited issue. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 197n.

²¹⁶ 'Report on the Trials of 12 Deserters', 9 October 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/435/81.

prison. For the most lightly punished, their front record, reason for desertion and willingness to seek redemption in action were cited, as was their 'good antifascist attitude' in the trial proceedings.²¹⁷ Even in a moment cited as a clear instance of Stalinism in action in the XV Brigade, the trials followed an idealised version of Stalinist practice, one that allowed for due process as understood in the context, differentiated responsibility, appropriate punishment and mercy for those who sought redemption.²¹⁸ This was not an attempt to emulate contemporary Stalinist purges, which were in any case not yet known of by most, if not all, volunteers, but rather the version of Stalinism imagined by Western communists – tough but necessary, efficient but fair, politicised yet 'democratic'.²¹⁹

If deserters were captured by other units or the police, they risked much harsher punishment, not least because of the issues with the Republican justice system identified above. Even then, however, efforts were still made to assess the circumstances and individuals' potential for rehabilitation. One document communicated a series of decisions regarding nineteen XV Brigade deserters arrested by Spanish police. Eight were sent to Camp Lukacs for 'work in rear.' Most of the rest were released to either the Battalion or Brigade Political Commissar. One, Edinburgh volunteer John Kennedy, was detained for further questioning regarding the British Consulate in Valencia's role in aiding and abetting desertion.²²⁰ However, the further deserters managed to flee, the less likely it was that such considerations were taken into account. One June 1937 report written by Bill Paynter downplayed concerns about the handling of the Donald and Sneddon case, writing that 'the fact that they are in prison in Valencia in all probability means that there are more serious charges against

²¹⁷ 'Report on the Trials', 9 October 1937, MML.

²¹⁸ These death sentences were likely never carried out, although, as Kirschenbaum points out, the incident is an excellent example of Stalinist norms and methods at work in Spain. Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 117–8.

²¹⁹ Interestingly, this observation is echoed by the anti-communist Spanish conscript Fausto Villar Esteban, who wrote that the communism of the 'fine lads' in the XV Brigade 'was not the Communism of the Soviets.' Villar Esteban, *Un Valencianito*, 62.

²²⁰ 'Decisions re prisoners at Garde Nacional', 17 August 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/451/83.

them.’²²¹ This, as has been seen above, was a problematic conclusion, and such attitudes only worsened the problems faced by volunteers in Republican jails.

Desertion was therefore a crime that could be aggravated by the circumstances and method. If deserters were willing to cross certain lines – such as involving their home government or hostile newspapers – harsher punishments might follow. The successful desertion of several Scottish volunteers, who had gone to the *Daily Mail* claiming to bear a ‘round robin’ petition signed by others wishing to be repatriated, engendered a particularly strong reaction in Spain and Scotland.²²² One of the trio, John Parker, was assaulted in Dundee as a punishment for his ‘betrayal.’²²³ This treatment, however, was the exception rather than the rule. The absence of reprisals towards returned deserters underscores a key limitation of any interpretation of the CPGB as a totalitarian, repressive organisation: once a volunteer returned home, the Party had few options to control them. Unless a returned volunteer wished to remain or progress within the Party, there were few ways in which their record in Spain might be held against them. There is little evidence that the evaluations so painstakingly composed in Spain were ever actually used by the CPGB. More often than not, even those who had deserted or otherwise transgressed in Spain were allowed to join both the Party and the ex-volunteers group, the International Brigade Association.²²⁴ Maintaining the International Brigades’ historical image quietly trumped any desire to draw lines between the worthy and unworthy.

²²¹ Paynter to Pollitt, 9 June 1937, MML.

²²² The existence of this petition has been a matter of conjecture. Contemporary correspondence claimed that it was fabricated to justify their desertion. Gray implicitly follows this interpretation. Gray, *Homage*, 194–5. However, newly declassified Security Service material indicates that a list was given to the British Government in April 1937. Case files of four Scottish volunteers showed them as having ‘signed “round robin” asking to be sent home.’ E.g. DOUGAN William and DUNBAR, Alex, KV 5/120; Gilmour to Paterson, 5 April 1937, MML, Box 50, File GI/17.

²²³ Gray, *Homage*, 195.

²²⁴ William McLennan, who had deserted in September 1938, was active in the IBA by May 1939. ‘McLennan, William’, RGASPI, 545/6/171/77; ‘MCLENNAN, William’, TNA, KV 5/127. Even Marcovitch rejoined the Party during the war. Marcovitch, Tape 182.

Conclusions

It was not only in Britain that the Communist Party faced constraints in punishing wayward volunteers. Even in Spain, where the military and judicial system allowed for, even condoned, the harsh treatment of crimes such as desertion, officials balked at imposing the harshest penalties. British Party leadership knew that its actions in Spain would be closely observed by a hostile press and political establishment, and were keen to avoid giving their opponents ammunition. This reflected a broader strategic need to not offend British sensibilities. The Republic's chief, albeit forlorn, hope was winning the support of the world's remaining democracies. Lurid tales of purges and executions would only strengthen the anti-communist instincts of Western governments. Whether or not the CPGB leadership was motivated by humanitarianism or expediency, this was a trump card against extreme internal repression from within or above. This provides a partial explanation of differing levels of political repression observed in other national contexts – the German contingent, for instance, composed chiefly of exiles, saw heightened levels of political paranoia, yet work by Michael Uhl suggests that this was still balanced by lenience towards desertion.²²⁵

It is a mistake, however, to view external constraints as the only impediment to Stalinist terror in the International Brigades. Faced with a myriad of unexpected problems stemming from the unprecedented nature of the enterprise, the leaders of the British contingent relied on their political beliefs and training to provide guidance in overcoming them, just as these same factors affected rank-and-file volunteers' responses to these efforts. This made the volunteers' existing beliefs vital in understanding how they responded to their new

²²⁵ Incidence of desertion appears to have been lower among Germans, possibly as they had nowhere else to go. Michael Uhl, *Mythos Spanien. Das Erbe der internationalen Brigaden in der DDR* (Bonn, 2004), 82. See also Peter Hubel and Michael Uhl, 'Die Internationalen Brigaden: Politische Überwachung und Repression nach Sichtung der russischen und westlichen Archivatken', *Ebre* 38 2 (2004), 32; Josie McLellan, 'I Wanted to be a Little Lenin': Ideology and the German International Brigade Volunteers', *Journal of Contemporary History* 41:2 (2006), 294.

circumstances in Spain. They – both leaders and followers – generally accepted the need for decisive leadership, for public justice to be done and above all the need for discipline. Their training as Bolsheviks-in-waiting had taught them this. Yet it had also taught them other values, in line with their perceptions of the supposed Soviet alternative. These values were immensely important, far more important than any specific doctrine or historical precedent, for the simple reason that, unlike the theory, almost all the volunteers had a firm idea of what they should mean in practice. Predictably, actually attempting to live up to and embody these ideals was impossible in the context of war in Spain. The result was a confusing web of political practices and cultures, as befits what was essentially an attempt to simultaneously conceptualise and organise a unique anti-fascist army. As has been shown here, there was little consistency between intent and implementation or imagination and reality when it came to the structures of political control within the British Battalion. The neat, ominous totalitarian structure envisaged by the likes of Hamish Fraser and subsequent revisionist historians did not exist, just as the propagandistic vision of the virtuous International Brigades was only ever mythical. While the International Brigades' generally haphazard organisation accounts for some of the gap between the perception and reality of political repression, it also reflects the success of the British Battalion's leadership in preserving a distinct and partly independent political culture.

Chapter Five: Encounters

Although the structures of the International Brigades may have helped the British Battalion to preserve its own political cultures and practices, it is important to avoid ascribing too much importance to the imagined boundaries between national groups in Spain. As indicated in much of the Scottish volunteers' testimony explored in previous chapters, interactions with other nationalities were an everyday experience when serving in the International Brigades. However, despite this indisputable reality, there is a tendency in existing historiography to divide the volunteers into neat categories, either by nationality or language group, and use these categories as self-contained units of analysis. Little attention is paid to how these boundaries were crossed, as they frequently and necessarily were, not least because even supposedly 'national' units usually contained a majority of Spanish conscripts.¹ The volunteers were thrust into a series of transnational encounters, and navigating them was an important yet neglected part of the experience of serving in the International Brigades.² This chapter takes as its focus some of the most common yet rarely discussed such encounters: those between the International Brigade volunteers and Spanish soldiers and civilians.

It is important to acknowledge that there were two sides to these interactions. Spaniards were not static objects for the volunteers to interact with, and their

¹ Even otherwise excellent accounts assume that 'contact with Spaniards was limited.' Josie McLennan, "I Wanted to be a Little Lenin": Ideology and the German International Brigade Volunteers', *Journal of Contemporary History* 41:2 (2006), 289. The tendency to divorce military forces from civilian life, especially during 'friendly' occupations, has been noted in other contexts. Craig Gibbs, *Behind the Front: British Soldiers and Civilians, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2014), 7–9.

² Lisa Kirschenbaum's study is a notable exception, dealing with such questions in some depth, albeit with important differences in focus and analytical approach. The findings here complement and in some cases help confirm her observations. Lisa Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2015), 83–116.

agency was a critical factor in shaping the encounters examined here. Yet this presents a methodological challenge. While there is an occasional paucity of sources from the perspective of ordinary Scottish volunteers, the available material by far outweighs that from Spanish perspectives. While there has been a steady market for the memories, writing and ephemera of foreign volunteers, the same cannot be said of Spaniards who also fought in the International Brigades or the civilians they met. This deficit in sources requires altering the scope of reference for this chapter, and using material that does not always pertain directly to the Scots. This means assuming that there were few fundamental differences in the way that Scots interacted with Spaniards compared to other English-speaking volunteers, and that Spaniards saw Scots in much the same way they saw other Britons, and to an extent also the Irish, Americans or Canadians. As the goal of this chapter is not to establish especial Scottish distinctiveness, but rather explore a neglected aspect of the lived experience of serving in the International Brigades, this assumption is sustainable. There is in any case little evidence to suggest that many Spaniards had a particularly developed appreciation for the nuances of British national identity. Scots, just as the English and Welsh, were usually simply *ingles*.

Beyond their experiences in Spain, it is useful to understand these interactions as influenced by the volunteers' own intellectual context. Part of this, of course, was the volunteers' own anti-fascism, which provided them with preconceptions and expectations of the Spanish people and their struggle. However, other influences were also at play. While the bulk of Scottish volunteers had never set foot outside Britain, their society did provide them with certain intellectual tools to equip them for dealing with foreigners and foreign places – through depictions of imperial relations. While Scottish communists might well have been outwardly and genuinely anti-imperialist, it is far less clear that Party membership sufficed to cleanse individuals of

unspoken and pervasive assumptions about race.³ While historians have cast doubt on the success of the heavy-handed and overt attempts to instil imperial values in the British population, it is possible to point to the persistence of 'banal imperialism' in the everyday stories Britons told themselves about their place in the world.⁴ For most Scots, knowledge of empire and race came chiefly from popular culture, from the music hall to the cinema.⁵ These mediums used stereotyped imperial relations to tell stories, stereotypes based on assumptions of superiority and the subordinate, single-dimensional roles of foreign actors as comic relief, victims or villains.⁶ Such assumptions could therefore inform Scots' contact with other nationalities in Spain, contact which in turn could challenge or reinforce such ways of thinking.⁷

It is more difficult to say precisely what preconceived ideas of Spain the Scottish volunteers brought with them. Some authors have tied perceptions of Spain in this period back to the notorious 'Black Legend', portraying Spain and Spaniards as intrinsically cruel and violent, a myth dating back to the sixteenth century.⁸ However, such arguments most often rest on evidence from literary and artistic sources, few of which can be tied to Scotland. Tom Buchanan points to the

³ It is also important to note that by the mid-1930s, anti-fascism took increasing precedence over anti-imperialism in Party discourse, with collective security requiring strengthening rather than weakening Western democracies – and, by extension, their empires. Tom Buchanan, "'The Dark Millions in the Colonies are Unavenged': Anti-Fascism and Anti-Imperialism in the 1930s," *Contemporary European History* 25:4 (2016), 600-3. In the Scottish context in particular, it is notable that one of the most effective popular anti-imperial campaigns of the late 1930s, in response to the Glasgow Empire Exhibition of 1938, was spearheaded by the ILP, not local communists. Sarah Britton, 'Come and See the Empire by the All Red Route!': Anti-Imperialism and Exhibitions in Interwar Britain, *History Workshop Journal* 69 (2010), 78-84.

⁴ Krishan Kumar, 'Empire, Nation, and National Identities' in Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (2011), 299-302. For a Scottish perspective, see Richard Finlay, 'The rise and fall of popular imperialism in Scotland, 1850-1950', *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 113:1 (1997), 13-21 and 'National Identity, Union, and Empire, c.1850-c.1970' in John MacKenzie and Tom Devine (eds.), *Scotland and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2011), 281-316.

⁵ Brad Beaven, *Visions of Empire: Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870-1939* (2012), 179-204; Jeffrey Richards, 'Boys Own Empire: Feature Films and Imperialism in the 1930s' in John MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and popular culture* (Manchester, 1986), 140-62.

⁶ Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke, 2003), 16-43, esp. 24-6.

⁷ Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 114.

⁸ E.g. María DeGuzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo-American Empire* (Minneapolis, 2005), 187-242.

perceptions nurtured by the 'British public' of Spain and the Spanish 'character', but the extent that this 'public' included working-class Scots is unclear.⁹ Brian Shelmerdine discusses various stereotypes and the 'assumptions of Spanish national character' in the public mind, yet explicitly frames this analysis in contrast to 'Englishness', and furthermore does not consider how this shaped International Brigade volunteers' time in Spain.¹⁰ Certainly, those who followed the left-wing press likely had knowledge of Spanish politics prior to the Civil War, with the advent of the Spanish Republic in 1931 and various political developments leading up to the war attracting substantial attention.¹¹ In particular, the 1934 uprising in Asturias was well-covered in communist and certain progressive media.¹² Scots, particularly those from Glasgow and surrounds, might also be assumed to be particularly aware of Spanish Catholicism, which had a particularly reactionary reputation.¹³ As such, Buchanan's argument that the Spanish Civil War was understood as a clash between 'Old' and 'New' Spain is a useful one, with the Republic seen as an idealised, modernising force countering an old, cruel and Catholic Spain.¹⁴ As shall be seen, it is also clear that many stereotypes of Spaniards – often as lazy, inefficient and undisciplined – are reflected in the volunteers' writing and testimony. These almost certainly reflect popular assumptions about the Spanish 'character' that predated their arrival in Spain.

Beyond exploring new aspects of volunteers' experiences in Spain, this chapter's goal is to establish that these encounters, both positive and negative, were shaped by specific structural factors. There is a tendency in historical writing on the International Brigades to consider negative interactions as either isolated incidents, or, in revisionist accounts, evidence for the fundamentally flawed

⁹ Tom Buchanan, *The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain* (Brighton, 2007), 1–22.

¹⁰ Brian Shelmerdine, *British Representations of the Spanish Civil War* (Manchester, 2006), 3.

¹¹ Buchanan, *Impact of the Spanish Civil War*, 2–7.

¹² Several volunteers recalled being aware of this coverage. Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices from War*, 317; Chris Smith, IWMSA, Tape 12290/2.

¹³ Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace: Religious tension in modern Scotland* (Manchester, 1987).

¹⁴ Buchanan, *Impact of the Spanish Civil War*, 7–15.

nature of the enterprise.¹⁵ This account contends that such encounters were not isolated or random, but the product of specific, often endemic causes that stemmed from the nature of the International Brigades themselves, their purpose and the individuals that had been recruited. Rather than one-off occurrences, it is possible to see similar issues recur throughout the volunteers' time in Spain. That is not to say that relations between Scots and Spaniards were static – they were influenced by changing circumstances and action by participants – but that they reflected underlying tension at the heart of the International Brigades project. Equally, however, the International Brigades' internal capacity and willingness to address these issues demonstrates the need for a more nuanced approach than simply identifying and criticising failures. The aim is not to assess whether interactions between the internationals and Spaniards should be seen as positive or negative, but to explore factors that led to a complex and variable set of relations between foreign volunteers and Spanish soldiers and civilians.

Comrades

While historians have not hidden the reality that the majority of those who served in the International Brigades were Spaniards, for the most part they have not portrayed the consequences in any detail. This is especially notable in accounts dealing with the Scottish and other British volunteers. It takes a close reading of Daniel Gray's book on the Scots to find mention of the many

¹⁵ Gray is explicit in dismissing negative incidents as 'extremely isolated'. Daniel Gray, *Homage to Caledonia* (Edinburgh, 2008), 83–4. See also Verle Johnson, *Legions of Babel: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War* (1967), 91–2. Baxell provides a more balanced picture, but does not delve into how relations were shaped, Richard Baxell, *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2004), 143–6. Hopkins makes brief mention of language issues and mutual antipathy as part of his broader condemnation of repression in the British Battalion, James Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire* (Stanford, 1998), 214–16. Radosh et al use several such incidents to inform their broader criticism of the Brigades, Ronald Radosh, Mary Habeck and Grigory Sevostianov, *Spain Betrayed* (New Haven, 2001), 240–8. See also Daniel Pastor Garcia and Antonio Celada, 'The Victors Write History, the Vanquished Literature: Myth, Distortion and Truth in the XV Brigade', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 89:7–8 (2012), 320; Robert Stradling, 'English-speaking Units of the International Brigades: War, Politics and Discipline', *Journal of Contemporary History* 45:4 (2010), 751.

Spaniards they served alongside.¹⁶ Richard Baxell devotes several pages to discussing tensions between the various national groups, including the Spaniards, although his analysis is often limited to testimony from British and other international sources, and does relatively little to systemically explore and explain how these relationships developed.¹⁷ In contrast, Cecil Eby was fortunate to gain access to a memoir written by a Spanish member of the International Brigades, and his account goes furthest in dealing with Spanish experiences of English-speaking units.¹⁸ Yet as valuable as this memoir is as a source – it is used here where appropriate – it cannot be considered as definitive in isolation. Moreover, Eby uses the source in line with his own expectations, highlighting the various inconsistencies, hypocrisies and ironies that Fausto Villar Esteban faced during his time in the XV Brigade. Yet by cherry-picking these moments from a single, rather unusual source, Eby's account fails to fully convince, especially as it often does not supplement Villar Esteban's words with sources that might add context and allow for broader conclusions to be drawn.¹⁹

The goal of this section is to add depth to historical understandings of the relationship between international volunteers and their Spanish comrades. It is important to move beyond simple binaries – were relations good or bad? – and attempt to understand the dynamics that shaped perceptions on both sides. In particular, it is necessary to use a broader source base to try to understand Spanish perspectives within the International Brigades. Here, James Matthews' work on Republican and Nationalist conscripts offers a model by which a range of voices can be appreciated within broad, often impersonal sources.²⁰ This section calls upon a variety of such sources to help understand the dynamics between Scottish volunteers and their Spanish comrades. On the Scottish side,

¹⁶ Even when they appear, Spaniards are rarely actually discussed. E.g. Gray, *Homage*, 70.

¹⁷ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 144–8. On a broader scale, see Remi Skoutelsky, *Novedad en el frente* (2007), 280–4.

¹⁸ Cecil Eby, *Comrades and Commissars* (Pennsylvania, 2007), xxii–xxiii.

¹⁹ E.g. Eby, *Comrades and Commissars*, 277–8.

²⁰ James Matthews, *Reluctant Warriors: Republican Popular Army and Nationalist Army Conscripts in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (Oxford, 2012).

this is relatively straightforward, although requires understanding the volunteers' internalised assumptions about those they had come to fight alongside. The key methodological challenge is presenting a convincing and balanced Spanish perspective that does not rely on isolated points of direct evidence. As with Matthews' study, the approach is made viable by the nature of the Spanish Republican Army itself, with its report-generating network of political commissars and attending concern with morale.²¹ Relations between Spaniards and Internationals was of ongoing concern to the military and political leadership, and a great deal of effort was spent addressing actual and potential grievances on both sides, as well as monitoring soldiers' opinions and morale through observation and censorship. This is supplemented in places by archival material from other Spanish organisations, both Republican and Nationalist.

While it is possible to establish a detailed picture of who the Scottish volunteers were in both an individual and demographic sense, doing so for their Spanish comrades presents a much more difficult challenge. While the Republican Popular Army naturally kept its own records, these were much less centralised than those kept about the International Brigades. The International Brigades in turn showed little administrative interest in their Spanish members. Beyond keeping lists of names of soldiers in various units, the International Brigades rarely recorded basic information such as political affiliation, point of origin, age or occupation.²² Tracing these names back to Spanish military archives to find enlistment paperwork containing further information would be a Herculean task. Such records remain in local military districts, and even attempting to match a small sample is rendered impossible by the lack of contextual information in the International Brigades records that might narrow the search by district or reserve class, or even help distinguish between recruits with

²¹ Matthews, *Reluctant Warriors*, 12.

²² While the differing level of information available for internationals compared to Spaniards is apparent throughout the archive, it is best shown by British personnel records being stored across 118 files, compared to just twelve files covering Spaniards across every International Brigade. RGASPI, 545/6/100-218,455-67. This lack of administrative concern makes it difficult to even estimate the number of Spaniards who served in the British Battalion.

common names. This task is well beyond the scope of this study, and likely any future studies barring the wholesale digitisation of these records across Spain.

The Franco regime's post-war persecution does offer some insight into the collective identity of the Spanish soldiers in the International Brigades. As part of broader efforts to catalogue targets for legal and other repressive measures after the war, captured Republican documents were used to establish the nature of individuals' wartime service on a massive scale. International Brigade hospital records and paysheets were archived and used to compile lists of thousands of Spaniards who served in the International Brigades.²³ While the information available for each individual is inconsistent, these lists offer the best broad picture of who these Spaniards were. They tended to be somewhat younger, often with less-skilled occupations, than their Scottish comrades. They were more likely to be agricultural workers or otherwise come from rural areas than the mainly urban-dwelling Scots. Interestingly, English-speaking units contained a disproportionate number of Spaniards in the list, with nearly a third of the sample belonging to the XV International Brigade.²⁴ There are two possible explanations. First, due to relatively lower levels of recruitment from English-speaking countries, more Spaniards were necessary to keep this brigade at full strength.²⁵ Second, the XV Brigade suffered disproportionate casualties in various actions, notably Jarama, Brunete and Calaceite, not only increasing personnel turnover, but also increasing their visibility in hospital records.²⁶ The appearance of so many XV Brigade Spaniards as casualties in International Brigade hospitals also challenges a common narrative – that the

²³ 'List of Spanish members of International Brigades', AGGCE, PS-44/3.

²⁴ 'List of Spanish members of International Brigades', AGGCE. This trend is also visible in other documents. An August 1937 report noted that the XV Brigade required more Spanish reinforcements: 1,000 compared to 500-700 for other international units. 'Proposiciones sobre la organización de las Brigadas Internacionales', 11 August 1937, RGASPI, 545/1/1/27.

²⁵ Skoutelsky, *Novedad*, 165–171.

²⁶ Hospital records, in turn, were a key source for the Salamanca list. 'List of Spanish members of International Brigades', AGGCE.

internationals were more willing to risk themselves for Spanish freedom than the Spaniards themselves.²⁷

Although the first Spaniards incorporated into the International Brigades were volunteers, it is unlikely that this remained the case for long. The bulk of rank-and-file recruits were conscripts from spring 1937 onwards, soon after the British Battalion was founded.²⁸ In particular, after the disastrous Aragon retreats in March 1938, the brigade was brought up to strength by incorporating large numbers of newly-conscripted Catalan youths. They, as one Nationalist intelligence report noted, had received little training, and represented a significant decline in the brigade's quality, still nominally a shock unit of the Republican Army.²⁹ While Nationalist intelligence reports were often prone to declaring their opponents to be demoralised and poorly motivated, there is little doubt that recruiting standards declined over the course of the war, as they did for the Republican Army as a whole.³⁰

For ordinary Spanish conscripts, being posted to the International Brigades was a mixed blessing. The memoir of Fausto Villar Esteban makes it clear that the International Brigades' reputation preceded them: he described them as the 'most prestigious of all' the Republic's 'shock forces', likening it to joining the Francoist Foreign Legion.³¹ His testimony shows that while the Spanish recruits appreciated the prestige of their new unit, the experience of joining was overwhelming. After being told that 'no one leaves except feet first and covered in glory', Esteban remembered that the words 'cut us deeper than the chill of

²⁷ E.g. Hamish Fraser, *The Truth About Spain* (1950), 4.

²⁸ Baxell is unclear on this point, contrasting the poor performance of recently conscripted Spanish troops in September 1938 with 'the battle-hardened and highly politicised Spanish volunteers in the International Brigades', implying that the Spaniards were predominantly volunteers throughout the conflict. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 145. As discussed by Matthews, however, the Republican reliance on conscripts meant that many if not most Spaniards in the International Brigades were no longer volunteers by spring 1937. Matthews, *Reluctant Warriors*, 219. See also Skoutelsky, *Novedad*, 280.

²⁹ Cuartel General del Generalísimo (CGG) to Ejército del Norte, 29 May 1938, AGMA, C.1,1 d.9.

³⁰ Matthews, *Reluctant Warriors*, 30.

³¹ Fausto Villar Esteban, *Un Valencianito en La Brigada Lincoln* [Unpublished Manuscript], Labadie Collection, University of Michigan, 5–6. Although undated, the memoir was apparently completed in the 1980s. Unless otherwise indicated, the translation of the original Spanish by Paul Sharkey, provided alongside the manuscript, has been used here.

that brisk autumn night... We were, every one of us, dumbfounded.’³² His reaction reflected the significant downsides of serving in the International Brigades. The International Brigades were in action much more often than other units, and suffered extremely high casualties.³³ According to one deserter to the Nationalists in May 1938, Spaniards resisted being assigned to the International Brigades as they were ‘*mas expuestas*.’³⁴ There were other, more everyday disadvantages – the International Brigades, for example, received less leave than other units.³⁵ This led to grumbling among international and Spanish troops alike, but was perhaps especially acute for Spanish troops, as several days leave offered the chance to see family and loved ones, rather than simply a chance for rest and recreation behind the lines.³⁶ These factors led to tactics to evade service – a July 1937 memorandum noted the increase of self-inflicted wounds and desertion among Spanish recruits to the XV Brigade, and British political commissars judged that many desertion cases were of Spaniards seeking to join regular Republican units.³⁷

Even everyday life in the International Brigades could give rise to friction. Simply feeding both Spanish and International troops was an exercise in culinary diplomacy. The International Brigades’ right to supplement their rations ‘*gusto y a la necesidad de cada Unidad*’ was enshrined by a decree from the Ministry of National Defence in October 1937, doubtless formalising a practice that already existed.³⁸ Not only did different national groups require different food – many Scots had an instinctive distrust of Spanish cooking – but these very differences could easily lead to allegations that one group was being

³² Villar Esteban, *Un Valencianito*, 5.

³³ Skoutlesky, *Novedad*, 394–5.

³⁴ Trans: ‘more risky’. CGG to Ejército del Norte, 22 May 1938, AGMA, C.1,1 d.6.

³⁵ ‘Meeting of Political Commissars of the Battalion’, 8 June 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/435/50.

³⁶ ‘Meeting of the Political Commissars’, 8 May 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/435/43.

³⁷ ‘Memorandum sur la situation des Brigades Internationales’, c. July 1937, RGASPI, 545/1/1/8; ‘Meeting of Political Commissars’, 8 June 1937, RGASPI. The phenomenon of desertion to other Spanish units is confirmed in the CNT archives, ‘Informa de la Columna Internacional’, May 1937, IISH-CNT, File 005E.8.

³⁸ Trans: ‘to suit the tastes and needs of each unit’. ‘Orden General del Día’, 23 October 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/2/170.

favoured over the other.³⁹ One report from December 1937 mentioned a particular disagreement along these lines, with Spaniards complaining that sugar was never available for their coffee, with 'the implication being that the Internationals use the sugar for sweet rice which Spaniards dislike.'⁴⁰ Such issues reflected a fundamental problem with different national groups serving side by side in such close proximity – treating everyone the same would please nobody, while treating them according to national preferences could easily be seen as favouritism.⁴¹

The International Brigades' association with communism could also make them unattractive. Rank-and-file Spanish conscripts came from a wide variety of political or apolitical backgrounds compared to the Scots, especially in 1938 when the Brigade received reinforcements almost exclusively from Catalonia, which led in turn to a rise in the number of anarchists and libertarians serving in the British Battalion. Everyday aspects of life in the International Brigades could be grating for non-communists, with communist culture and norms permeating everyday existence. Communists also dominated the Spanish units, as either open Party members or the communist-dominated youth organisation *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas*.⁴² In one list of XV Brigade commissars and political delegates from February 1938, the only other Spanish party represented was the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, which had one lone member, while there was also one member of the anarcho-syndicalist trade union organisation *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT).⁴³ Neither served in the British Battalion. Such documents confirm the observations of Scottish

³⁹ For example, Andre Marty allegedly confiscated 'personal parcels sent for the Canadians on the grounds that such preferential treatment accentuated national differences and was helping Fascism', Alexander to Pollitt, 26 May 1938, MML, Box C, File 22/6.

⁴⁰ 'Report on and Recommendations re the English Battalion', [December 1937?], AGGCE, PS-Aragon, Box 6, File 9.

⁴¹ Assumptions about national preferences over something as simple as bread might fuel disagreements. Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 133.

⁴² Helen Graham, 'The Socialist Youth in the JSU: the Experience of Organizational Unity, 1936–8', in Martin Blinkhorn (ed.), *Spain in Conflict, 1931–1939, Democracy and its Enemies* (1986), 83–102.

⁴³ 'Relación de los Comisarios y Delegados de la XV Brigada', 10 February 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/452/43.

volunteer Gary McCartney, who 'never [knew] any commissar of any battalion to be other than Communist.'⁴⁴

This list was indicative of a broader issue that caused tension between Spanish recruits and the International Brigade leadership throughout the conflict – the tendency on one hand to view political development as a solution to morale and discipline problems, while on the other having to accommodate a wide variety of political beliefs. Commissars were simultaneously expected to instil communist discipline and political understanding amongst their charges, yet nominally forbidden from attempting to extoll communism itself. There was no pleasing both sides. Other groups showed considerable concern about the organisation of the International Brigades and the nature of communist influence.⁴⁵ Even before the influx of large numbers of Catalanian recruits, the Defence Section of the CNT National Committee had received complaints from their members and sympathisers in the ranks of the International Brigades.

Es cada vez mas terrible la situación de un cantidad de compañeros y simpatizantes que actuan de dichas Brigadas, se nota una descomposición que se debe a la disciplina estúpida que no permite que un miliciano lea un diario o un manifesto que sea otra tendencia que la comunista. Por el solo hecho de llevar una insignia libertaria o un pañuelo roji-negro se detiene a los soldados. Sería deseable ver si es posible hacer algo para librar a estos infelices de esta situación angustiosa.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Garry McCartney, TLS, MS, Tape 168.

⁴⁵ While histories of anarchism have noted such concerns (see below), relatively little attention has been paid to direct efforts to confront and ameliorate them. Such efforts are documented, albeit in a fragmented way, in the CNT archives. E.g. 'Informa de la Columna Internacional', May 1937, IISH-CNT. Such attention that has been paid to this issue have been almost exclusively from the International perspective, e.g. Johnston, *Legions of Babel*, 91.

⁴⁶ Trans: 'The situation of some comrades and sympathisers in these brigades is constantly getting worse. They have noted a deterioration because of stupid disciplinary measures, which do not allow militiamen to read a newspaper or statement that is not of a communist tendency. They are detained for merely wearing a libertarian insignia or a red-black scarf. It would be desirable to see if it is possible to release these unhappy people from this troubled situation.' 'Brigadas Internacionales', 14 July 1937, IISH-CNT, File 94H.3.

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which such complaints were based on fact or rumour.⁴⁷ Certainly, and as the communists themselves acknowledged after the war, it was easy for misunderstandings about intentions to emerge, especially given the poor communication between nationalities. One report noted that the 'very obvious and clumsy' efforts to carry out Party work in the XV Brigade meant that:

It appeared that the Communists were trying to 'hide' something from the rest of the troops. Naturally this did not help, but hurt, the unity between the Communists and others in the brigade – the non-party, anarchist, and others. This was especially evidenced among the Spanish comrades.⁴⁸

Although such incidents may have stemmed in part from misunderstanding, it is important to acknowledge that this potential was inherent in the structures of the International Brigades, and the constant injunctions for more intense political work could not be readily achieved without potentially alienating non-communists. It was not only anarchists who chafed at Communist Party dominance. Similar complaints came from socialists, with one international delegate of the Italian Socialist Party calling for the freedom of non-communist soldiers and officers in the International Brigades to transfer to new units. The author, M. Masetti, reported that non-communists found the situation intolerable, and claimed to receive numerous reports of '*fusilamientos sin previo juicio, degradaciones y detenciones injustificadas*.'⁴⁹ Taking aim at André Marty and other *enchufistas* [careerists] in the rearguard, whose removal would '*pondrá fin a muchos dispendios inútiles*', Masetti concluded that,

La experiencia pasada de las B[rigadas] I[nternacionales] ha demostrado que en estas condiciones, no es posible la convivencia

⁴⁷ The reply asked the Catalan Regional Committee to document the incidents described, '*con todo detalle*', so that they could, if necessary, publicly expose it. They also noted that they could not proceed without concrete evidence, indicating that while the National Committee took the accusations seriously, they were wary of acting over unfounded rumours. Comité Nacional (Sección Defensa) to Comité Regional de Cataluña, 17 July 1937, IISH-CNT, File 94H.3.

⁴⁸ 'Report on the Political Development of the XVth International Brigade', [1938?], RGASPI, 545/6/21/7.

⁴⁹ Trans: 'executions without trial, demotions and unjustified detentions'. Letter from M. Masetti, 13 May 1938, IISH-CNT, File 94G.3.

entre comunistas y socialistas o simpatizantes, porque estos no quieren estar bajo la dictadura de aquellos.⁵⁰

Such complaints were used to justify challenging the communist monopoly over political organisation in the International Brigades, and more broadly their perceived dominance over the Republican armed forces. In one communiqué to the Political Commissar of the XV Brigade in April 1938, the Defence Section of the CNT National Committee noted the presence of some 500 'libertarians' in the brigade, and demanded that a commission be established to:

- a) Envío regular la propaganda a la Brigada.
- b) Nombrar un compañero responsable de la misma Brigada a los efectos de relación y propaganda.
- c) Pasar el 1º de Mayo con ellos e intervenir en los actos que se realizarán conmemorando la fecha.
- d) Procurar que un Sindicato apadrine un Batallón.⁵¹

Beyond a natural interest in the welfare of their membership, this sort of intervention reflected concerns other groups had about the International Brigades. In part, this outlook was informed by fears that after being subject to communist leadership and propaganda, their adherents could be converted. It is these reservations that the demands listed above were intended to address in making their own propaganda available, and generally attempting to undermine the communist stranglehold on the units' political culture. However, fears about communist proselytisation need to be understood as part of broader apprehension that the International Brigades were part of the Spanish Communist Party's push for greater control over the war effort.⁵² The International Brigades' status as communist-controlled outside agents raised

⁵⁰ Trans: 'put an end to much useless expenditure' and 'Past experience of the International Brigades has shown that in these conditions, it is not possible for socialists to coexist with communists, because they do not want to be under communist dictatorship.' Letter from M. Masetti, 13 May 1938.

⁵¹ Trans: 'a) Send regular propaganda to the Brigade. b) Appoint a responsible comrade for their Brigade's communication and propaganda matter. c) Spend May 1st with them and take part in the activities commemorating the date. d) Have a union sponsor a battalion.' Letter from Sección Defensa de CNT to XV Brigade, 27 April 1938, IISH-CNT, File 94H.3.

⁵² For context from an anarchist perspective, see José Peirats, *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution: Volume 3* (2006), 137–57. See also Marta Bizcarrando and Antonio Elorza, 'Las Brigadas Internacionales. Imágenes desde la izquierda', *Ayer*, 56 (2004), 70–8.

the possibility that they might be used as tools against internal rivals.⁵³ While these concerns generally remained private, and most parties expressed public appreciation for them as a symbol of international solidarity, they nonetheless meant that the International Brigades' internal politics were a matter of ongoing significance, and other parties took any chance to dilute or check Communist Party influence over the Spanish recruits.

Although such issues continued to raise hackles throughout the conflict, it is important to note the extent to which they were both understood and addressed. On one level, this involved something akin to diplomacy, with carefully choreographed visits from delegations, and the exchange of carefully worded declarations and assurances of good faith.⁵⁴ This was matched by efforts on the ground to ease tension. While the political commissariat functioned imperfectly, it did provide the International Brigades and other interested parties with the mechanisms to address many of these complaints. By later stages of the war, the International Brigades had grown more responsive to the varying needs of its soldiers.⁵⁵ Scottish Political Commissar Tom Murray, who served from April 1938, recalled some of these provisions.

One of my jobs in this connection was to distribute the press, to make sure that all the members who wanted to could get copies of the Spanish press. And I had to be careful that... papers of a Catalan quality had to be given to the Catalans.⁵⁶

Aside from responding to external pressure, the network of Political Commissars allowed for such issues to be identified and addressed from within. Numerous internal and external reports were written about both the British Battalion and XV Brigade, many of which touched on relations between the

⁵³ Robert Alexander, *The Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War* (2007), 947, 1044–5.

⁵⁴ For example, the resolution sent by the XV Brigade commissariat celebrating 'the magnificent programme of united action of the glorious central unions, the UGT-CNT'. Gates to La Federación Local UGT-CNT Barcelona, 8 July 1938, IISH-CNT, File C66. For the visit of a 'workers' delegation' to the XV Brigade, featuring 'small speeches' and 'anti-fascist declarations', stressing the 'frank unity' with anarchists, libertarians and the UGT, see 35 Division Commissariat Report, 4–6 June 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/10/56.

⁵⁵ This is confirmed in the records of other parties. Sección Defensa del Comité Nacional de CNT to Ejecutivo de Catalunya, 16 July 1938, IISH 94H.3.

⁵⁶ Tom Murray in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 313–14.

Spanish and foreign soldiers. These reports reveal that the process by which Spaniards were integrated and catered for in the International Brigades was a slow one, doubtless undermined by the frequent changes in personnel and leadership that came with high casualties and reassignments after bloody battles at Jarama, Brunete and Calaceite. Even by December 1937, it was clear that there were still distinct problems that were far from resolved.

Amongst the Spanish comrades there is no party organisation, few party members and a great number of recruits who have no political understanding and amongst whom a great amount of political work should be but is not done. The language difficulty and the low political level makes it exceedingly difficult to know what elements are responsible for the undiscipline [sic] that shows itself from time to time.⁵⁷

While it is tempting to dismiss this and other reports' obsession with party organisation and political work as political correctness gone mad, the lack of a Spanish political representative undermined the Battalion's ability to cater for their needs. The report's recommendation that 'a Spanish comrade be found capable of being responsible for Spanish comrades politically' was aimed at addressing practical sources of discontent amongst the Spanish troops. It was recommended that the candidate be given equal rank to Battalion Political Commissar, Wally Tapsell, or at least made his adjutant, an important symbolic step in cementing the status of both Spanish soldiers and their particular needs.⁵⁸ Moreover, the recommended 'first task' was eminently practical.

[To] organise the feeding of Spanish comrades so that their rations are separately cooked to disprove once and for all of any suggestion that Internationals are living at the expense of Spanish comrades... As far as possible without disorganising things by undue complication the feeding and clothing of Spanish comrades should be controlled by a Spanish comrade.⁵⁹

It must be acknowledged that the commissariat was working as intended in this regard, as a practical way to address real issues affecting morale rather than

⁵⁷ 'Report on and Recommendations re the English Battalion', AGGCE.

⁵⁸ 'Report on and Recommendations re the English Battalion', AGGCE.

⁵⁹ 'Report on and Recommendations re the English Battalion', AGGCE.

simply a mechanism of political control. It is clear that the author appreciated the substance of complaints, and recommended concrete steps to rectify these issues. However, this report, coming as it did nearly a year after the founding of the British Battalion, and many months after it started integrating Spanish recruits, shows that this system was often more reactive than proactive. While mechanisms did exist for positive change for Spanish and International soldiers alike, they worked slowly. Moreover, until capable and effective commissars were found for the Spanish sections, the ability of this institution to correct existing problems was substantially undermined.⁶⁰ This meant that problems lingered throughout the International Brigades' tenure in Spain.

Despite the repetitive nature of these issues, other structural factors prevented them from souring relations between rank-and-file soldiers. This was perhaps especially so for the Scots, for the simple reason that exceptionally few Scots spoke Spanish, and as such often lacked knowledge of their Spanish comrades' gripes and concerns. As noted in Chapter One, Scots were among the least likely of any national group to speak a foreign language, although this was certainly still an issue for the other contingents.⁶¹ It is no coincidence that testimony dealing with the complexities of relations between internationals and Spaniards often comes from the small minority of Scots who spoke the language competently. This included John Dunlop, who spoke at some length on the issues that arose from the integration of large numbers of anarchist conscripts.

They were very inclined to question the right of anybody to give them orders, because of their Anarchist beliefs. And we had to explain very carefully to them why it was essential that in military matters anyway the orders had to be obeyed.⁶²

⁶⁰ The 'weakness' of Spanish commissars was noted as early as August 1937. 'Report on morale of XV Brigade', 8 August 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/435/75.

⁶¹ E.g. McLennan, "I Wanted to be a Little Lenin", 289. A useful comparison is with British soldiers in France in the First World War, see Krista Cowman, "'The ... "parlez" is not going on very well "avec moi": Learning and Using "Trench French" on the Western Front' in Walker and Declerc (eds.), *Languages and the First World War: Communicating in a Transnational War* (London, 2016), 25–43.

⁶² Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 147–8

Dunlop's language skills meant that his encounters with Spanish comrades were more frequent and complex, as did his status as a non-commissioned officer who needed to instruct Spanish subordinates. This is reflected in his testimony when discussing the Spaniards' politics above, but also in his recollection of his daily routines – he recalled that 'whenever possible [he] used to go over to the Spanish group...and feed with them', lamenting British cooks' 'insular' attitude to Spanish cuisine and ingredients.⁶³ This experience reflected that of Glaswegian 'Cheeky' McCraig, whose natural aptitude for languages meant that 'in Madrigueras everybody was starving but Cheeky was down the road eating well speaking fluent Spanish in a fortnight.'⁶⁴ However, those who actively sought to understand and share the company of their Spanish comrades were relatively rare amongst the Scots – another, Alec Ferguson, recalled that very few volunteers spoke Spanish, and that his eventual competence 'wasn't typical.'⁶⁵ Linguistic difficulties could cut both ways – Villar Esteban, serving for a time as the lone Spaniard on Battalion staff, bemoaned the resulting feeling of isolation.⁶⁶ Similarly, volunteers sent to Spanish hospitals complained of the problems caused by mutual incomprehension between staff and patient.⁶⁷ Being unable to communicate complex ideas, most volunteers were content with establishing basic goodwill with their comrades in arms – as William Gilmour put it in a letter, 'we are all as happy as hell, in spite of the difficulties of language and customs.'⁶⁸ Gilmour might well have substituted 'because of' in place of 'in spite of'. Similarly, George Murray poked fun at his own linguistic incompetence:

We have a Spanish class here and I am now a fluent linguist. My Spanish is so good that the Spaniards hardly understand a word I am saying! We must have them educated! Despite the language barrier, which is a perpetual nuisance, I have made good friends in many nationalities.⁶⁹

⁶³ Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 132.

⁶⁴ Sydney Quinn, TLS, MS, Tape 202.

⁶⁵ Alec Ferguson, TLS, MS, Tape 239.

⁶⁶ Villar Esteban, *Un Valencianito*, 58.

⁶⁷ E.g., Keddie to Kerrigan, 26 February 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/158/5–6.

⁶⁸ Gilmour to Paterson, 20 April 1937, MML, Box 50, File G1/19.

⁶⁹ George to Lily Murray, 24 May 1937, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 4.

The resulting tendency towards picking up fragments of other languages was parodied in a song composed about the language difficulties.

Ich kam nach Spain in Januar
Yo hablar seulement English
But jetzt I say Comment Savar
Wie gehts, Que tal, tovarisch

Ich fahren mit mein ambulance
In woikin shoit and panties
No tengo tiempo por romance
Y arbeit más duro que antes.⁷⁰

Although clearly a source of humour, such fragmentary understandings of different languages did serve a useful purpose. At least among the more politically engaged elements on both sides, relations were facilitated by a common language of solidarity. Most Scottish volunteers were quick to learn and use the verbal and non-verbal expressions of the Popular Front, such as the clenched-fist salute, slogans such as *¡No Pasarán!* and the ubiquitous *camaradas*. William Gilmour wrote to his friend at home that ‘often we understand each other spiritually as we are all imbued with the same antifascist spirit.’⁷¹ Alec Park, in a letter back to Scotland, was particularly evocative of the sights and sounds of solidarity.

The Spanish people themselves welcome our assistance and on all hands we are greeted with ‘*Salud Camarada*’, even by the children. They have been celebrating Lenin’s birthday, in the market square there is a large picture of Lenin on a red banner, at night there is lit up a large red star and all around the balconies of the buildings display pictures of the various Soviet and Spanish Republican leaders amidst the Republican colours.⁷²

For their part, Scottish volunteers were thrilled to exchange such gestures with their Spanish comrades – they were putting into practice the theory of international solidarity, and its reciprocation represented an important affirmation of the power and rightness of their own political beliefs and purpose

⁷⁰ ‘The Internationalist’, RGASPI, 545/2/176/230.

⁷¹ Gilmour to Paterson, 20 April 1937, MML.

⁷² Park to ‘Hugh’, 27 January 1938, MML, Box A-12, File Pa/6.

in coming to Spain. Such interactions were superficial, yet sufficed to establish goodwill and common purpose.⁷³ There was, however, a danger that in being satisfied with establishing a basic common ground between themselves and their Spanish comrades, more complicated underlying issues were simply not addressed or understood by the international volunteers.

The dominance of complaints regarding material issues also mitigated against their influencing relationships amongst rank-and-file soldiers. Systemic issues such as rations and leave allowances were patently not the volunteers' fault, and involving them in their complaints – even if this could have been communicated – made little sense. Moreover, it was difficult to avoid appreciating the considerable personal sacrifices the foreign volunteers were making. This reconciliation between appreciation and affection for the volunteers with criticism towards the institution of the International Brigades is striking in Villar Esteban's memoir. While he was certainly critical in places, his appreciation for the volunteers' self-sacrifice was also clear.

All I could do was convey my thanks to all present... Thanks, for the generous, ready offering of their lives... Thanks, for their disinterested commitment, because the material assistance afforded to both sides had been handsomely paid for... Only the men of the International Brigades levied no charge.⁷⁴

As such, dissatisfaction with serving in the International Brigades should not be taken as evidence that basic everyday encounters between the volunteers and their Spanish comrades were generally characterised by bad blood. Yet this inability to communicate effectively did have consequences. The poor state of most volunteers' Spanish language skills was a constant worry for the International Brigade leadership. Not only was a working knowledge of Spanish immensely important in a Spanish-speaking army, there was perceived political value in volunteers learning and speaking Spanish. Articles in *Nuestro Combate*

⁷³ A similar point is made in Gray, *Homage*, 83.

⁷⁴ Esteban, *Un Valencianito*, v-vi.

and *Volunteer for Liberty*, the XV Brigade newspapers, often hammered home the need for volunteers to learn Spanish:

Outstanding... is the urgent need for all of us to learn the Spanish language. This is important for military reasons but it is also politically important. This change brings us into much closer contact with our Spanish comrades.⁷⁵

American and British comrades, learn Spanish! ... We must learn Spanish in order to fulfil our mission here with the maximum effectiveness. This effectiveness demands the closest and most intimate relationship possible with our Spanish fellow-fighters in our Brigade.⁷⁶

Such articles were accompanied by a range of practical initiatives, from the oft-mentioned language classes to a specially designed English-Spanish grammar book.⁷⁷ While encouragement to learn Spanish was often phrased positively – it could hardly be openly admitted that relations between Spaniards and internationals were anything other than excellent – the underlying message was that language was not only of practical benefit, but a major barrier preventing meaningful integration and understanding between the Spanish and foreign soldiers. This was echoed in the public and private statements and reports of the commissariat. The issue was stated plainly at a conference of British Political Commissars in November 1937.

More and more we need to thoroughly absorb and act upon the idea that we are now a part of the Spanish army that we are as responsible for the Spanish comrades in our base, Battalion and hospitals as much as for the British and to interest ourselves in every way in their life and problems. An elementary knowledge of the Spanish language is essential for every one of us.⁷⁸

This oft-expressed concern about the language barrier between Spanish and English-speaking soldiers reflects a more pervasive issue that haunted the International Brigades and could threaten to undermine the basic cohesion of

⁷⁵ *Nuestro Combate*, 13 March 1937, MML, Box D-7, File F/13.

⁷⁶ *Volunteer for Liberty*, 23 February 1937, 2.

⁷⁷ On classes, see George Murray above, also Gilmour to Paterson, 4 June 1937, MML, Box 50, File GI/23. See also 'English-Spanish Grammar', June 1938, MML, Box 22, File B/8.

⁷⁸ 'British Political Commissars Conference, Notes for Report', 21 November 1937, MML, Box C, File 19.

its units. Many at all levels of the British contingent came to view the Spanish troops as unreliable and less willing to fight for the cause than the foreign volunteers. Battalion Commissar Wally Tapsell, writing after the bloodbath at Brunete, was particularly vehement.

In plain fact, and it is hard to state this, on every occasion we were with Spanish troops in this engagement they let us down. Their behaviour on every occasion either resulted in serious casualties, or the immediate loss of positions won by us at heavy cost. This is a fact. I cannot speak for other Spanish troops, this is the hard fact of our experience. Consequently one of the biggest, if not the biggest morale question in the Battalion is – Why such behaviour from the Spanish troops. Pious prattle does not satisfy men who have been wounded, who have seen their pals and brothers shot down; wounded and killed and have a clear and truthful picture of what transpired.⁷⁹

Similarly, H.O. Knester reported that ‘the Spanish militia is useless’ and that ‘on a decisive day on the Jarama, 2 militia battalions were not there where they ought to have been.’⁸⁰ Similar views can be detected in the testimony of Scottish volunteers, although often couched euphemistically. Hamish Fraser was the most blunt.

The despair of the Republic was its inability to rely on any troops other than those units which were composed of, organized and led by Communists... No International Brigader is likely to dispute this. Indeed, that so many of the Brigaders drenched the soil of Spain so liberally with their blood was tribute to more than their mistaken idealism (and the Brigades were as a whole representative of the cream of the working class); their blood was willing tribute to the confidence the Spanish people did *not* have in the government of the Republic [original emphasis].⁸¹

Fraser’s words cannot be taken at face value. Although a committed communist in Spain, he converted to both Catholicism and anti-communism later in life and this particular text was written for a Catholic publisher. It is clear that he wanted to downplay the Republic’s popular support and the willingness of its

⁷⁹ Tapsell to [Pollitt?], 9 August 1937, MML, Box C, File 16/1.

⁸⁰ H.O. Knester, ‘Report on deserters, Donald and Sneddon’, 9 May 1937, MML, Box 39, File A/9.

⁸¹ Fraser, *The Truth About Spain*, 4.

citizens to defend it.⁸² Yet his words do reflect other volunteers' more tactful views about the Spanish troops' effectiveness. Responding to a question about whether the Spaniards needed the International Brigades because they were not willing to fight themselves, Sydney Quinn replied,

What I would say was, unlike Britain, France, Germany...they'd lost their empire over a long period. They never had soldiers abroad, you know, and little wars and they never been involved in the world war and their military knowledge and experience among the top, well the top leadership had deserted to the Fascists, of course, they had all the available knowledge and military experience... it was just the fact that in that particular field at particular time they just didn't have enough experience, and the Internationals played that role, gave the necessary experience.⁸³

Quinn's statement represents a more typical opinion of Spanish soldiers. While generally neither hostile nor doubtful of their commitment, most Scots were condescending regarding Spaniards' fighting ability. In part, these attitudes harken back to their very motivation in coming to Spain, and their preconceived notions about the nature of the struggle. Spain, and by extension Spaniards, was seen as the defenceless victim of militaristic fascism. The volunteers therefore saw themselves as saviours, reinforcements from abroad who could teach and protect innocent Spaniards until they were able to defend themselves. While the Spanish people were undoubtedly heroic in such formulations, this heroism was constructed in passive terms of resistance and suffering, serving to highlight their primary status as victims. The International Brigades' role was seen as that of an older, more experienced sibling – there to 'stiffen up the Spaniards', in the words of James Maley.⁸⁴ John Londrigan drew explicitly on this imagery of

⁸² Fraser was unconsciously echoing the wartime analysis of Nationalist military intelligence, who concluded that the internationals and other communist units were 'las únicas tropas, de las que tienen que puedan luchar a campo abierto' [the only troops they have who can fight in the open]. While the Republic certainly had difficulties motivating conscripted troops, both Fraser and the Nationalists had an interest in portraying the Republic as unpopular and illegitimate. E.g. 'Informe sobre el Division 35', January 1938, AGMA, C.1567,22 d.3; 'Información del Enemigo', Ejército del Norte, 19 April 1938, AGMA, C.1222,71, d.6.

⁸³ Quinn was apparently unaware of recent wars in Morocco. Quinn, Tape 202.

⁸⁴ James Maley, IWMSA, Tape 11947/1.

innocent, immature Spaniards unable to adapt to modern warfare in justifying the intervention of the International Brigades.

[The Spaniards] were very childlike. I don't use the word in an insulting way. They were very childlike in their innocence and they were very nice to get on with, they'd do anything for you. There's a tale going about, and I quite believe it's true, that in Jarama the Spaniards who used to help the British Battalion used to go back home at night time. They used to leave the line and go back home to their houses and then come back up again in the morning. That was the sort of childishness they had. They had never been involved in war before and had known nothing about it at all.⁸⁵

Paternal attitudes were also apparent when discussing their Spanish comrades' non-military attainments. Like most Republican units, classes were established in the British Battalion to combat endemic illiteracy among the Spanish recruits.⁸⁶ Particularly for the organisers of such classes, the assumed teacher-student relationship could also feed in to their existing assumptions about their role in Spain.

One of the jobs of a commissar was to provide educational facilities, especially for illiterates. And we trained a number of Spaniards in the elements of reading and writing and so forth... I vividly recall two Spaniards, Ors and Linaris, both of whom I am sorry to say were killed later on. These two had a *chabola* [shelter/shack] and I used to listen to them in the evening laboriously trying to read Spanish. I thought to myself what splendid fellows they were, making an effort like that because they had been denied education earlier in life.⁸⁷

Murray's fond reminiscence was undoubtedly not intended to be patronising, yet it is hard to avoid reading it as symptomatic of the international volunteers' attitude that they had come to Spain to better the locals.⁸⁸ As argued in Chapter Two, the desire to be part of a civilising mission crafting a socialist Spain needs to be understood as a key motivation for volunteering, and it is natural that such

⁸⁵ Londragan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 179.

⁸⁶ Michael Alpert, *The Republican Army in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (Cambridge, 2013), 159–60.

⁸⁷ Tom Murray in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 213.

⁸⁸ Interestingly, Murray claims direct credit for training the Spaniards in this fashion. Villar Esteban's memoir suggests that the extent of English-speaking commissars' involvement was finding a suitably literate Spaniard to assume responsibility. Villar Esteban, *Un Valencianito*, 56–7.

motivations translated into the volunteers' understandings of their relationships with their Spanish comrades – particularly with the frequent inability of either party to communicate complex ideas.

Beyond these saviour/victim and teacher/student dynamics, the Scottish volunteers' attitudes to Spanish soldiers were also informed by imperial modes of thought. In particular, many volunteers subscribed to hierarchies of race when it came to explaining military effectiveness. James Maley of Glasgow was the most blunt when assessing the quality of the Spanish troops he served with at Jarama, opining that 'the Spaniards, they're like the Italians. They're just not like British or German soldiers.'⁸⁹ Such formulations were far from uncommon, and underpinned claims that the British Battalion was especially elite, such as Tommy Bloomfield's assertion that they were 'top dogs in Spain', or David Anderson's view that while the Americans were 'extremely good organisers', the 'British were better fighters' as they 'could accept hardships.'⁹⁰ Many volunteers believed that races could be divided into warlike and unwarlike peoples, with Italians generally being placed at the bottom of such hierarchies.

The Italians were pretty easy to capture, you know. Well, you know what happened to the Italians later on in the Second World War. I mean, they didn't fancy fighting at all, because they are a peaceful kind of people, Italians.⁹¹

While the retrospective nature of such claims – perhaps informed by British experiences of fighting Italy in the Second World War – is problematic, it must also be allowed that this trope of the 'unwarlike' Italian has deep roots, stemming as far back as the sixteenth century.⁹² As such, the tendency to adopt racialised hierarchies should be seen as a product of contemporary British and indeed European society rather than a later reimagining of the volunteers' time in Spain. Such beliefs could be normalised and internalised through the

⁸⁹ Maley, Tape 11947/3/1.

⁹⁰ Bloomfield and Anderson in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 52, 95.

⁹¹ George Murray in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 103

⁹² Christie Davies, 'Humour is not a strategy in war', *Journal of European Studies* 31 (2001), 400. See also debate on the origins of this trope with contributions from Davies, John Gooch, Stanislav Andreski and Alexander Lopasic in *Journal of Strategic Studies* 5:2 (1982), 248–75.

depiction of racial roles and stereotypes in contemporary popular culture, as well as accounts of the Great War, and this process offers the most convincing explanation for the prevalence of such attitudes among the Scottish volunteers.⁹³ Nor should such factors be considered unique to the Scottish or British contingents: as discussed previously, narratives of national military superiority in the International Brigades were common.⁹⁴ Rather, this strikes right to the heart of the International Brigades' purpose in Spain. With the majority of British volunteers having little or no prior military knowledge, the formulations quoted above about providing 'necessary experience' are hard to sustain.⁹⁵ In fact, this can be interpreted as echoing the classic imperial assumption that colonial troops needed to be led or 'stiffened' by white soldiers to be effective.⁹⁶ The International Brigades' very existence needs to be understood as being in part the product of such ways of thinking.

Any such existing attitudes were also reinforced by the dynamic within Republican forces privileging the 'volunteer' as inherently superior to conscripts.⁹⁷ Although this discourse featured on both sides, it became more important for the Republicans over the course of the war, as the imbalance of war materiel meant that greater emphasis was placed on soldiers' morale and dedication.⁹⁸ These assumptions often intersected with volunteers' other views discussed above.

I wasn't impressed by the fighting qualities of Mussolini's Italian troops in Spain, no. The toughest of the lot were the Germans, and the Moors

⁹³ This was perhaps particularly relevant for Scotland, where discourses of 'martial races' had gained credence and popularisation through such representations over the previous century. Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester, 2004), 116-55.

⁹⁴ These national stereotypes also informed reporting of the International Brigades in Britain. Shelmerdine, *British Representations*, 113-15.

⁹⁵ While it is difficult to ascertain precise numbers, those with military experiences were certainly in the minority. Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 13-14.

⁹⁶ On this trope, see George Morton-Jack, *The Indian Army on the Western Front: India's Expeditionary Force to France and Belgium in the First World War* (Cambridge, 2014), 16-18.

⁹⁷ Matthews, *Reluctant Warriors*, 84-5.

⁹⁸ During the Aragon offensive, for instance, the XV Brigade newspaper cited 'the brilliant morale of our troops' which would enable victory against a 'more numerous' enemy with 'better weapons'. *Volunteer for Liberty*, 17 March 1938, 1.

next. But the Italians! I saw the Garibaldis o' the International Brigade. They were different: they had men that were fighting for a belief. It was bred in them. They werenae there because they were sent there. They were volunteers. And there's quite a difference between a volunteer and a man ramrodded into a thing.⁹⁹

The Scots' status as volunteers therefore acted to cement implicit perceptions of superiority and boosted their self-confidence, but this contrasted uneasily with the status of most of their Spanish comrades as conscripts. As James Mathews has shown, Spanish conscripts throughout the Republican Army resented the perceived favouritism towards volunteers, and it is natural that this would be reflected in units such as the International Brigades, in which volunteers and conscripts were readily differentiated along the lines of language and nationality.¹⁰⁰

Assumptions of superiority could seriously disrupt relations between Spaniards and international volunteers. While complaints about material conditions and discrepancies in treatment in the International Brigades did not appear to have greatly influenced relationships between rank-and-file soldiers, perceived disrespect had the potential to undermine relations at all levels. The myriad of ways in which international volunteers assumed an inherent superiority was often apparent to many Spaniards in the International Brigades, which in turn naturally bred resentment. One report from January 1938 specifically singled out the British Battalion:

En cuanto a las relaciones entre los españoles e internacionales, estas no son satisfactorias, En los [Batallones] de esta [Brigada] especialmente en el [Batallón] Inglés, existe un concepto de superioridad que les hace mirar con cierto desprecio a los combatientes españoles manifestándose esto hasta en los simples soldados llevado al extremo de no guardar el mismo respecto y obediencia a los mandos españoles que a los de lengua inglesa.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Bloomfield in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 53.

¹⁰⁰ Mathews, *Reluctant Warriors*, 173.

¹⁰¹ Trans: 'As to the relations between the Spanish and internationals, they are not satisfactory. In the Battalions of this Brigade, especially in the British Battalion, there exists a conception of superiority that makes them view the Spanish fighters with some contempt, demonstrated when even low-ranking soldiers do not treat Spanish commanders with the same respect and

This, as the report made clear, was a source of considerable frustration for Spanish officers, many of whom were better trained and more experienced than their international counterparts. Another report from August 1937 makes it clear that complaints about Spanish troops were already a well-established phenomenon.

Savage and unjustified criticism of Spanish troops was heard, particularly from the weakest comrades. It must be understood that the attitude taken towards the Spanish comrades is perhaps the surest of all morale barometers.¹⁰²

Such animosity towards the Spanish troops and officers presented a circular problem for the International Brigades' leaders. It was recognised that if Spanish troops felt that they were disrespected and treated like second-class citizens in their own country, they would be less likely to operate as an effective unit alongside foreign troops, resulting in the very symptoms that caused disrespect. Claiming, as Knester and Tapsell did in private, that Spanish troops were less motivated and reliable than the internationals, was therefore both politically and militarily unacceptable. Instead, the blame was placed at the feet of the international volunteers.

Al lado de esos ha faltado también la comprensión necesaria del papel de las Brigadas Internacionales en el desarrollo del Ejército Español, manifestado en la falta de compenetración entre los soldados españoles e internacionales. En los ataques, por ejemplo, ha habido casos en que los internacionales han avanzado y los españoles en los mismo batallones se han quedado atras. La responsabilidad ha sido de los camaradas internacionales que en muchos casos han adoptado una aptitud de desprecio a los españoles.¹⁰³

obedience as those who speak English.' 'Informe sobre la 15a Brigada Internacional', 21 January 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/7/42-3.

¹⁰² 'Report on morale', 8 August 1937, RGASPI.

¹⁰³ Trans: 'There has been a lack of understanding regarding the role of the International Brigades in the development of the Spanish Army, manifesting in a lack of rapport between Spanish and international soldiers. During attacks, for example, there have been cases in which the internationals have advanced and the Spaniards in the same battalions have stayed behind. The responsibility lies with the international comrades, who in many cases have adopted an attitude of contempt towards the Spaniards.' 'Informe que hace el compañero Jack sobre la 15 Brigada', 1 December 1937, RGASPI, 545/3/433/133-4.

The report, unsurprisingly, concluded that the problem lay in insufficient political work, and could be addressed by mobilising communists to serve as examples in discipline, care of arms, military training and supporting the political work of the commissariat.¹⁰⁴ This conclusion was often echoed whenever the question of relations between Internationals and Spaniards arose.¹⁰⁵ This was perhaps the only politically acceptable answer, and offered the attractive prospect that issues could be addressed through positive measures, albeit still reinforcing a teacher/student dynamic in which the success of Spaniards was dependent on the Internationals' capacity to uplift them.

However, efforts to shape interactions between Spaniards and foreign volunteers were never fully successful, and appear to have been cyclical throughout the International Brigades' existence. Even by early 1937, articles in XV Brigade newspapers appeared with the intent of changing a troublesome status quo. One from March 1937 listed undesirable behaviours so specific there can be little doubt that they were addressing concrete behaviours:

Encourage desertion, flee when advancing, let weapons rust, waste ammunition, constantly grumble, always talk about leave, don't carry out orders, argue that anti-fascist officers are incompetent and needlessly send militiamen to their death, spread false rumours like that there are fascists in the popular army headquarters, blame lack of wine on H[ead]Q[arters] and QM drinking it all... unfavourably compare Spanish soldiers with internationals, say that English and French militiamen should return home because of recent decrees.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, a survey conducted of Political Commissars in mid-1938 confirms that these same issues were of continued concern, asking commissars to detail the '*situación exacta de las relaciones entre camaradas internacionales y españoles*', any difficulties they presented and, echoing the report above, the level of

¹⁰⁴ 'Informe que hace el compañero Jack', 1 December 1937, RGASPI.

¹⁰⁵ E.g, *Volunteer for Liberty*, 13 December 1937, 5.

¹⁰⁶ *Nuestro Combate*, 23 March 1937, MML, Box D-7, File F/13.

respect for the Spanish officers.¹⁰⁷ Later in the conflict, the looming repatriation of foreign volunteers could also act to sour relations, '*producido muy mal efecto entre los camaradas españoles*', who were aware that the volunteers were eager to leave to their respective countries, through desertion if necessary.¹⁰⁸

Without more intimate perspectives from Spaniards within the International Brigades, it is difficult to assess the extent to which such factors undermined relations between rank-and-file soldiers. It is clear that the Spanish recruits often resented the institution of the International Brigades. Certainly, the level of concern shown by the leadership, and the clear evidence of the persistence of such attitudes among the international volunteers, indicates that these were not isolated views. It is noteworthy that many of the themes addressed here are also present in the declarations made to the Nationalists by Spanish deserters from the International Brigades, one of the few sources that directly preserve the viewpoints of ordinary Spanish soldiers.¹⁰⁹ Though often hyperbolic, the observations are familiar.

Por su buen espíritu militar son tratados mejor que los españoles, cobran lo mismo que ellos pero son preferidos en lo que se refiere a vestuario y alimentación. Aunque a los españoles les faltan a ellos jamás les ha faltado nada. De ahí se explica también la animosidad de una infinidad de españoles... Esta animosidad ha nacido también del desprecio con que la Oficialidad trata a los españoles que más de una vez se manifiesta en reproches rudos diciéndoles que si al principio hubiesen tenido valor no habrían tenido que abandonar su trabajo para auxiliar a los proletarios que se habían caracterizado por su cobardía.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Trans: 'the precise state of relations between international and Spanish comrades'. Circular, [May-June 1938?], RGASPI, 545/3/430/327.

¹⁰⁸ Trans: 'produced a very bad feeling among the Spanish comrades.' Parte extraordinario de la reunión que celebró ayer el Comisario de la Brigada, 6 September 1938, 545/3/435/171-3

¹⁰⁹ E.g. 'Información militar practica al prisionero José Garrido Barrero', 9 December 1937, AGMA, C.1221,18 d.2-3.

¹¹⁰ Trans: 'Because of their good military spirit, they are treated better than the Spaniards, they earn the same but are preferred when it comes to clothing or food. Although the Spanish lack these things, they have never lacked for anything. This also explains the animosity of an infinity of Spaniards... This animosity also stemmed from the contempt by which the officers treat the Spaniards, which manifested itself more than once in rude reproaches, telling the Spaniards that if they had had valour from the start, they would not have had to abandon their work to help proletarians who have been characterised by their cowardice.' Boletín de Información, Grupo de divisiones del sur del Ebro, 12 December 1937, AGMA, C.1221,16 d.9-10. Similarly, see Boletín

These are of course not unmediated voices, nor even typical voices thanks to their status as deserters or defectors. These declarations were likely shaped by what the defectors believed their interrogators wished to hear. However, given that their themes overlap with the reports of the International Brigades' own Political Commissars, they are unlikely to be outright fabrications. While not an even-handed window into the views of the Spanish soldiers in the International Brigades, it is also clear that deserters tended to use real, if potentially exaggerated, grievances to inform their stories. From them, we can posit that for a minority of Spanish soldiers in the International Brigades, the issues described here were serious and led to significant barriers between them and the international volunteers. However, other sources, such as censorship reports on Spaniards' correspondence, indicate that morale was often considered high – in one case concluding that their letters indicated great satisfaction with the international military leaders.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, these reports, while perhaps confirming that such issues never reached a critical level, provide only a very limited and generalised snapshot into the concerns of Spaniards in the International Brigades. They cannot be taken as contradiction of the many other sources that raised concerns about how these relationships took shape.

From the Scottish volunteers' perspective, relations with their Spanish comrades were shaped heavily by expectations of the conflict in Spain and their role in it. For the individual volunteers motivated by the desire to take action against fascism, going to Spain embodied their belief that their fight could make a tangible difference. The portrayal of the struggle overseas, which emphasised the bravery, sacrifice and martyrdom of the Spanish people, encouraged prospective volunteers to cast themselves as saviours. While they undoubtedly meant well, and their sacrifices were certainly appreciated by their Spanish

de Información del Enemigo, Ejército del Norte, January 1938, AGMA, C.1221,33, d.8. Such reports doubtless fed into Nationalist conclusions that singled out the morale of Spaniards in the International Brigades as particularly fragile, e.g. 'Morale de Enemigo', 105th Division, August 1938, AGMA, C.1854,5 d.47.

¹¹¹ 'La situation morale au sein des B.I.', 10-20 October 1937, RGASPI, 545/2/159/10. For a broad selection of these reports, see RGASPI, 545/2/156-9; AGGCE, PS-Barcelona, Box 15, File 8.

comrades, framing their participation in this way could not help but foster local resentment at being treated as less knowledgeable or capable. This in turn was compounded by the volunteers' inability to leave behind the imperial ways of thinking of their home societies, with racialised hierarchies continuing to inform how the volunteers saw their role in the Spanish armed forces. Scots, given the ubiquity of Scottish 'martial race' ideologies, were perhaps especially prone to such ways of thinking, yet it is unlikely that they were exceptional. Most national groups thought in similar terms, constructing hierarchies that almost invariably placed themselves at the top. The underlying justification for the International Brigades project can be seen as stemming from an assumption that Spaniards made poor soldiers and that internationals, however inexperienced, would do better than the locals by virtue of their race. Friction caused by disrespect between Spaniards and non-Spaniards, fuelled by such assumptions of superiority, needs to be understood as a systemic issue for the International Brigades stemming from their very conception.

Civilians

While contact with Spanish comrades in arms was a daily experience for most international volunteers, contact with civilians was more sporadic. Yet for both individual volunteers and the International Brigade leadership, interaction with the civilian population was immensely important. For the individual, Spanish civilians – especially women and children – were representations of what they were fighting for. Positive exchanges affirmed their decision to fight for Spain, and these interactions became treasured memories for many volunteers. Volunteers were also fascinated by the differences to home – landscapes, food, even the 'quaint Spanish peasant atmosphere' underscored how exotic Spain was for working-class Scots.¹¹² Yet it is telling just how difficult it is to present any information about the International Brigades from the perspective of ordinary civilians. While the structures of the Republican Army helped preserve

¹¹² Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices From War*, 116.

the perspectives of ordinary soldiers, the same cannot be said of civilians. As such, this section is concerned primarily with Spanish civilians as they were encountered and imagined by the Scots, with any presentation of civilians' reciprocal views remaining speculative at best.

The International Brigades' leaders soon realised that these encounters required mediation. Relations between soldiers and civilians in wartime are always complex, with both sides having a series of needs that such interactions can fulfil, needs that did not necessarily align.¹¹³ It was politically vital that the International Brigades enjoyed a positive relationship with the Spanish people, and numerous practical and propaganda initiatives were launched in an effort to ensure that this remained the case. This came into conflict with the volunteers' own desires for, and conceptions of, relaxation and leisure. For many Scots, this involved the consumption of alcohol, which often ended poorly when it came to maintaining good relations with the local population. Sexual relationships were also a product of the volunteers' time in Spain, although success in pursuing them depended a great deal on location, timing and language skills, and these experiences were far from universal. Regulating such behaviour was seen as vital by the political leadership, for the sake of both avoiding problems with local populations and maintaining high levels of socialist morality and hygiene in the International Brigades themselves.

Volunteers' first experiences of Spanish civilians often came immediately upon crossing the border. The sheer excitement this engendered should not be underestimated. The symbols of the Popular Front and left-wing solidarity were immediate and very apparent. This served to reinforce their preconceived notions of what Spain and its people were like – a society in which the working classes were united and mobilised, and progressive politics were part of the fabric of everyday life. The volunteers' testimony often lingered on descriptions of such moments: the slogans daubed on walls, the clenched-fist salutes of agricultural workers, as well as frequent singing and cries of *salud*

¹¹³ Gibbs, *Behind the Front*, 6–26.

camaradas.¹¹⁴ Here was a vista and soundscape that underscored the difference between the society they had left and the one they aimed to defend. The kaleidoscope of symbols of international solidarity were often supplemented by concrete acts – passing through orange groves in the picking season, recent arrivals travelling by train found themselves showered with fruit by the pickers.¹¹⁵ Such gestures were reciprocated, as Jimmy Maley recalled.

The first day I was there, a little boy spoke to me. I didn't know what he was talking about but I knew what he meant, so I got some food and gave him it to give to his mother.¹¹⁶

Maley's words are interesting, especially in response to the interviewer's question about whether he learned much Spanish while in Spain. Maley implicitly allows that he did not, and that his interactions with civilians were based as much on his expectations as their actual attempts at communication. His encounter can also be interpreted cynically: did locals realise that new volunteers, emotionally overwhelmed by the displays of solidarity around them and not yet realising the value of food in wartime, were easy marks? Maley recalled the reception as friendly, even 'hospitable', yet given the one-sided nature of their interactions there remains the prospect that this welcome was to some extent performative.¹¹⁷ A similarly ambiguous dynamic featured in Alec Ferguson's testimony.

The Spanish people were so extremely friendly that they would take you by the hand sort of thing, first there's an instance before I learned to speak Spanish, we went to buy some fruit, which I incidentally gave away, the biggest mistake I ever made because the children were starving and I was going to give it to one little girl... as soon as I gave them to one, of course, an army of children gathered round me and I finished up giving the lot away and the parents were condemning the children but I mean you could understand the children. When we wanted to buy this fruit the

¹¹⁴ E.g., Anderson and Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 90-1, 128-9.

¹¹⁵ Clarke in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 59.

¹¹⁶ Maley, Tape 11947/3/1. Others also remembered children and civilians begging for bread on their arrival, e.g. Drever in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 279.

¹¹⁷ Maley, Tape 11947/3/1.

prices they were charging were so exuberant [sic] that the Spanish people themselves wouldn't buy them.¹¹⁸

Like Maley, Ferguson's instinctive generosity towards locals, especially children, highlights several underlying dynamics. On one level, such encounters could be seen as reinforcing the volunteers' conception of themselves as saviours, carers as well as physical defenders of the Spanish people. It is also interesting that Ferguson's train of thought, starting with the Spanish people's friendliness, went almost immediately to his recollection of being mobbed by children seeking food from him, implicitly framing his friendly relationship with Spaniards in a transactional sense. This is also hinted at by the Ferguson's observation that Spaniards were becoming unable to afford 'luxury' items such as fruit. This points not only to a growing awareness of the war's impact on the civilian population, but also discrepancies in standards of living between relatively well-fed internationals and the hungry populace.

It is difficult to imagine that Spanish civilians viewed such discrepancies with equanimity. Fausto Villar Esteban's memoir describes he and his fellow conscripts' reaction to their first meal after joining the XV Brigade.

We newcomers find that the food here is plentiful; three separate courses plus butter and rice pudding... These fellows must eat their full regularly if they can indulge themselves in the luxury of conducting themselves with such refinement so that there is no rationing of their food and none of their abundance goes to waste. As we share our meal, Manolo and I pass comment on all of this and cannot get over our surprise.¹¹⁹

Such issues could never be completely avoided given the practice of billeting the International Brigades in towns and villages when away from the front. This meant that managing their relationships with the local population was a recurring concern for the International Brigade leadership. The political necessity of maintaining positive connections with the Spanish people was readily apparent, and a great deal of propaganda was aimed at framing these

¹¹⁸ Ferguson, Tape 239.

¹¹⁹ Villar Esteban, *Un Valencianito*, 35.

relationships appropriately. These efforts also sought to establish the foreign fighters' good intentions in the eyes of Spanish comrades and civilians, as numerous Spanish-language articles make clear.

Desde su llegada a España los combatientes de la libertad, que habían dejado en sus países hogar y familia para acudir en ayuda de la nación invadida, encontraron en nuestros pueblos todo el cariño y aprecio a que eran acreedores... En cuantas ocasiones disminuyeron las raciones para entregar su pan a los habitantes del pueblo; cuantas otras quedaron sin fumar para entregar su tabaco a los campesinos; pero, indudablemente, los mejores amigos de nuestros camaradas internacionales fueron siempre los niños. Todos les parecía poco para obsequiarlos: juguetes, meriendas, vestidos, material para sus escuelas...¹²⁰

Efforts were made to match such words with deeds. Parades, concerts and sports days were organised whenever possible to both provide entertainment and encourage positive interactions with the locals.¹²¹ Work among children was accorded particular significance in propaganda, with articles appearing regularly about children's homes sponsored by the International Brigades.¹²² When duties allowed, volunteers also aided local work, from repairing buildings to helping with the harvest.¹²³ It is difficult to say how often this actually happened in practice, and given how few volunteers discuss it in their testimony, it is likely that it was rarer than propaganda made out.¹²⁴ This should not necessarily be interpreted cynically – uninterrupted periods of rest were relatively rare – but can be taken as further evidence that the leadership recognised the necessity of maintaining positive relations with the Spanish people. This view was often reciprocated – various large and small Spanish

¹²⁰Trans: 'Since their arrival in Spain, the fighters for liberty, who had left their homes, families and countries to come to the aid of this invaded nation, found in our villages all the affection and appreciation that could be believed... On many occasions they reduced their rations in order to provide bread to the inhabitants of the village, many other times they went without smoking and gave their tobacco to the farmers. But, undoubtedly, the best friends of our international comrades were always the children. Nothing seemed too much to give them: toys, snacks, clothes, material for their schools...' 'Los internacionales y el pueblo', *Reconquista*, RGASPI, 545/3/22/39.

¹²¹ E.g. *Volunteer for Liberty*, 20 December 1937, 4.

¹²² E.g. *Volunteer for Liberty*, 23 August 1937, 6; *Volunteer for Liberty*, 13 September 1937, 5–6.

¹²³ E.g. *Volunteer for Liberty*, 5 February 1938, 3.

¹²⁴ Many volunteers did give substantial amounts from their own wages to local causes. Hundreds of pages of donations for Spanish children were recorded during one campaign in mid-1937, RGASPI, 545/1/77–9.

organisations sought to make concrete gestures of solidarity and appreciation to the international volunteers, such as the University Students Federation branch of the Lagasca Institute, which presented XV Brigade with a banner, to meetings filled with Popular Front dignitaries hosted by the *Socorro Rojo Internacional*.¹²⁵ Such events were also reported in the Republican press, and this acted to cement the foreign fighters' status as heroic defenders of the Republic in the eyes of civilians.¹²⁶

It is difficult to say whether these high-level expressions of gratitude and praise had much impact on ordinary volunteers' time in Spain. Certainly, it was reported in the XV Brigade press, which gave ample space, for instance, to tributes received from all quarters on the anniversary of the International Brigades' founding in October 1937.¹²⁷ However, the volunteers themselves focused much more on concrete exchanges that they experienced directly. It is telling, for instance, that one of the few personal effects kept by Scottish Political Commissar George Aitken was a greeting card signed by the children and teachers at the local school at Mondejar, expressing their thanks and gratitude to the British Battalion.¹²⁸ Of all the high-level praise heaped upon the volunteers in Spain, it was the occasions on which it was delivered personally that resonated. Many recalled the famous farewell parade in Barcelona, addressed by the incomparable Dolores Ibárruri, known as La Pasionaria.¹²⁹ Yet the volunteers who were present only occasionally referred to her speech – it was the crowds that dominated their memories, and evoked the most emotional response.¹³⁰ Bill Cranston was clearly overwhelmed at the time and even recalling it decades later.

I took part in the big final march in Barcelona. Oh, I couldnae explain it. I was wantin' tae cry. We were marchin' doon and the reception we got

¹²⁵ *Volunteer for Liberty*, 13 September 1937, 4 and 8.

¹²⁶ The SRI event above, for instance, was heavily covered in *ABC*, 7 September 1937, 11.

¹²⁷ *Volunteer for Liberty*, 14 October 1937, 11.

¹²⁸ Greeting Card, 30 July 1937, MML, Box 50, File Ak/1.

¹²⁹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 107–8.

¹³⁰ Hugh Sloan, for instance, admitted that he was not close enough to even hear any speeches. Sloan in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 234.

from the people – women and everything, a' kissin' and huggin' us and all the rest o' it. It's a thing I'll never forget, never.¹³¹

Being so openly welcomed and appreciated by ordinary Spaniards clearly moved many Scots, an experience that was not limited to their Barcelona farewell. One report from August 1937 tied the volunteers' morale to the reception they received from civilians, noting that in one village 'the feeling between the people and the comrades is very warm. Young girls dance in public with the comrades.'¹³² Similarly, Arthur Nicoll, who recalled having few opportunities for meeting Spanish civilians, was invited by a Spanish sergeant to stay with his family when both visited Valencia.¹³³ For Nicoll, this wasn't just a chance to experience warm hospitality, but to bolster his faith in the Spanish people themselves.

He invited me to join him [at home] and I got an amazing reception. I stayed two nights in the household and they couldn't do enough for me. These people just didn't have any pro-fascist feelings at all, they just could not accept them there.¹³⁴

From the volunteers' perspective, the positivity of such encounters was important, and Nicoll was not alone in pointing to such moments as confirming the underlying correctness of his coming to Spain. There is no doubt that many locals were delighted to host the international volunteers when they could, and wished to show hospitality and appreciation towards the foreigners who were so liberally sacrificing their lives. Yet it is important to acknowledge the self-selecting nature of these encounters. Nicoll would never have been invited to meet this family had the sergeant not known that the reception would have been positive. In other contexts, similarly self-selecting forces were at work. John Dunlop, recalling socialising during training in Madrigueras, noted that he spent time with George Murray and several others in a local café, which was run by 'the principal Communist official in the village' – not a venue where he was

¹³¹ Cranston in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 192.

¹³² 'Report on morale', 8 August 1937, RGASPI.

¹³³ Arthur Nicoll, IWMSA, Tape 817/2.

¹³⁴ Nicoll, Tape 817/2.

likely to encounter unsympathetic locals.¹³⁵ As such, when other volunteers talked more expansively about their reception in Spain, it is difficult to take their words at face value. Tommy Bloomfield, for instance, recalled that 'Spanish civilians were very friendly and everywhere you went if there was a meal on their table they would invite you to partake of that meal.'¹³⁶ While memories such as this should be taken as evidence that interactions between locals and internationals were frequently positive on both sides, they should not be taken as proof that all such encounters were positive. Bloomfield also glosses over the transactional element to meal sharing in Spanish village life – a practice referred to in Villar Esteban's memoir, in which he describes the apparently everyday occurrence of partaking of locals' meals in exchange for a small gratuity.¹³⁷ In Bloomfield's case, he recalled providing cigarettes for his hosts.¹³⁸

Accounts that stress the broad welcome received by volunteers should also be balanced against less positive memories of specific places and events. John Lochore claimed to recall the hostile action of the 'Fifth Column' when leaving Albacete by bus – 'a bullet cut clean through the glass of the window, missing [his] head by the merest fraction.'¹³⁹ Although Lochore had no way of knowing what had actually transpired, his rationalisation of it as the work of Fifth Columnists implicitly acknowledges the existence of hostile local opinion towards the International Brigades. While a fanciful story, Lochore had a point – by the very nature of civil wars, it is unlikely that they were ever universally welcomed everywhere they went. John Dunlop, who, as noted previously, had a firmer grasp of local politics than most volunteers, recalled concern about how anarchist-dominated areas would react to their presence.

¹³⁵ Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 131.

¹³⁶ Bloomfield in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 52.

¹³⁷ Villar Esteban, *Un Valencianito*, 32.

¹³⁸ Bloomfield in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 52.

¹³⁹ Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices From War*, 117.

When we used to go through Catalanian country we always had to watch out for ourselves because we didn't know how we were going to be received at that particular time by the people.¹⁴⁰

It is important to acknowledge how the inhabitants of these locales might mirror Dunlop's unease – civilians had considerably more to fear from an armed body of soldiers than the soldiers did from civilians. While it is difficult to imagine the British volunteers embarking on a programme of politically-motivated violence directed towards Republican civilians, their good intentions were not necessarily apparent to an outside observer. There was quiet concern among Spain's non-communist political organisations, particularly the anarchists, that the International Brigades might represent a weapon not just against Franco, but also against the Communist Party's internal opponents.¹⁴¹ These fears could be replicated on a local level – one refugee from the Republican Zone who made her way to France told Nationalist agents that an International Brigade had been lodged in her village. She claimed that it was '*creencia general que esta Brigada tiene por especial misión reprimir cualquier acto de protesta que pueda iniciarse en contra del Gobierno rojo.*'¹⁴² While such testimony is not necessarily representative, coming as it did from a refugee who evidently sought out Nationalist agents, it is nonetheless indicative of alternative local perspectives on the International Brigades. While it is unlikely that the international volunteers would have countenanced taking violent action against the 'Spanish people', this was a categorisation that excluded many – Fifth Columnists, Trotskyists and other elements perceived to be hostile and therefore not afforded status as civilians in a civil war setting.¹⁴³ The boundaries between such categories could potentially be very malleable, depending on local

¹⁴⁰ Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 179.

¹⁴¹ Alexander, *Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War*, 947.

¹⁴² Trans: 'generally believed that this Brigade had a special mission to suppress any act of protest that might be initiated against the Red Government.' Nota de Información del Enemigo (30379), 25 April 1938, AGMA, C.1973,3 d.4.

¹⁴³ The course of the war itself could act the stretch these conceptual boundaries, with Stalinist formulations in particular offering a vocabulary for understanding setbacks as stemming from enemies within. In one such instance, a XV Brigade prisoner rationalised the failure to adequately fortify Belchite as 'sabotage' in the Republican rearguard. Informe de SIPM, 1 June 1938, C.1327,14, d.1.

variation, political shifts within the Popular Front and the course of the war.¹⁴⁴ For many Spaniards, the appearance of foreign volunteers in their midst could only have been cause for concern, certainly among those who were hostile to the Republic but also for anyone whose politics could be construed as anti-communist. Historians need to be wary of replicating wartime categories in their analysis in such cases, and be aware that the 'Spanish people' for whom the volunteers showed so much affection was a carefully moderated category, with many potential exceptions.

Close proximity to civilians also opened the door for sexual encounters between locals and volunteers.¹⁴⁵ This, it must be noted, was far from a universal experience. Writing home, 'Dusty' Miller bemoaned his lack of social life in Spain.

This place isn't so bad, although it isn't quite so cheerful as Sauchiehall St on a Saturday evening, as a matter of fact it isn't hellish cheerful at all. What I mean to say is, you can't drop into Lauder's and have a quiet one and then have a night at the Playhouse. As to women, I haven't even spoken to one yet.¹⁴⁶

Equally, the constant movement and demands of fighting a war could often nip romance in the bud. David Anderson had gotten engaged to a local girl during training at Tarazona, an engagement Anderson considered ended when the March 1938 defeats cut the British off from that part of Spain.¹⁴⁷ Those who were more successful in finding local women to interact with found that local courtship traditions were somewhat more stifling than they were used to. Tommy Bloomfield, for instance, recalled that while in Madrigueras he got to know a family with two daughters – and 'if [he] wanted to court them [he] had

¹⁴⁴ For an intricate summary of the political shifts in Republican Spain – notably the May 1937 incidents in Barcelona – see Julian Casanova, *Anarchism, the Republic and Civil War in Spain, 1931–1939* (London, 2004), 115–57. On the broader phenomenon of defining and engaging internal enemies in Republican Spain, see Julius Ruiz, *The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid* (2014), esp. 284–303.

¹⁴⁵ It is useful to contrast these experiences with those of British soldiers in France in the First World War, for whom many of the imperatives (danger, foreign travel, pay) and constraints (language, limited time, venereal disease) were familiar. Gibson, *Behind the Front*, 309–46.

¹⁴⁶ Miller to 'Bill', 8 February 1938, MML, Box 50, File Mi/1.

¹⁴⁷ Anderson in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 98.

to court them in front of their father and mother.’¹⁴⁸ The lack of astute linguists in the Scottish contingent also likely limited the extent to which their charms could be appreciated by the locals. There was, however, another route to gratification: prostitution. Imminent danger combined with the relative freedom of being away from home was a time-honoured formula, and more than a few volunteers chose to experiment in this direction. Brothels along the route to Spain soon acquired reputations, with Peter Kerrigan writing to Harry Pollitt in February 1937 asking that future volunteers be warned about those in Perpignan and Figueras, ‘as quite a few have contracted V[enereal]D[isease].’¹⁴⁹ This advice was evidently followed up: during John Dunlop’s journey in May 1937, he recalled being given a lecture by Charlotte Haldane about the dangers of ‘casual women’, advice that some ‘puritanical’ individuals ‘took strong exception to.’¹⁵⁰ Such recreational activity was hardly the preserve of the younger, more impressionable volunteers. John Lochore recalled visiting an unnamed but ‘prominent’ trade union official in hospital, whose case of VD had left him depressed and mortified, the latter feeling apparently shared by Lochore.¹⁵¹ The records of the International Brigades are generally reticent about such issues, although in some cases, what is left unsaid could be extremely pointed, as in one report discussing repatriation cases.

J. Sloan. The last address I have of this man is No. 3 Hospital (VD) although there are other cases there. A telegram has arrived signed Dr Jackson saying ‘Please grant J Sloan leave wife undergoing serious operation’.¹⁵²

Reactions to the spread of VD in the International Brigades varied substantially, depending both on individuals’ personal outlook and the victim’s own standing. For those who were highly thought of, such as Lochore’s trade unionist, there

¹⁴⁸ Bloomfield in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 52.

¹⁴⁹ Kerrigan to Pollitt, 6 February 1937, MML, Box C, File 10.

¹⁵⁰ Charlotte Haldane, along with her husband Professor J.B.S. Haldane, were well-known in Communist circles at the time, and Charlotte Haldane would go on to chair the International Brigade Wounded and Dependents’ Fund. Dunlop in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 119.

¹⁵¹ Lochore in MacDougall, *Voices from War*, 127–8.

¹⁵² ‘Repatriation and allowance requests’, [1937?], MML, Box 39, File A/12.

was a degree of sympathy. However, for those who had been found wanting in Spain, suffering from VD was further confirmation of their failings. Charles Bayley, who was repatriated without service, had contracting VD on his list of sins, alongside being a 'rotter' and a 'coward.'¹⁵³ Alexander Elder of Musselburgh was even accused of contracting VD deliberately to avoid frontline service.¹⁵⁴ This variability in how sufferers of VD were treated irritated Alec Marcovitch.

[It was] the differential in the standard and also the question of the morality. Not so much a lot of the lads, some of the people in the HQ knocked up with venereal disease and I argued the case as well that this was a military crime because it impaired the efficiency of a man to carry out his military duties apart from anything else.¹⁵⁵

Marcovitch's views were extreme, and need to be seen as part of his broader vendetta against the communist leadership discussed in Chapter Four. Yet they indicate the breadth of thinking regarding sex and morality, and how this rather fundamental aspect of interaction with locals should be controlled. Marcovitch's preferences clearly tended towards the International Brigades being composed of abstinent Marxist warrior monks, while others clearly saw sex as a right earned through frontline service. Tellingly, it was when VD was conceptualised as avoidance of line service – such as with Bayley and Elder above – that views on the sexual health of volunteers tended to converge. This contrasts interestingly with Lisa Kirschenbaum's analysis of communist sexual mores in Spain. Kirschenbaum highlights the struggle between the expectations of a particularly Bolshevik personal morality – serious, disciplined and abstinent – with the working-class masculine ideal embraced by many rank-and-file volunteers.¹⁵⁶ Among the Scots at least, sex in excess was the preserve of the hardened, tough and manly fighter, a right that had to be earned through service. Casual sexual encounters and the diseases they brought were otherwise indicative of moral decay – suggesting that communist norms were understood

¹⁵³ 'BAYLEY, Charles', 18 April 1939, RGASPI, 545/6/104/56.

¹⁵⁴ 'Elder, A', 15 September 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/128/1.

¹⁵⁵ Alec Marcovitch, TLS, MS, Tape 182.

¹⁵⁶ Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 161–74.

as negotiable based on one's perceived standing within the cause, reflecting attitudes towards political transgressions discussed in the previous chapter.

Socialising with locals also needs to be distinguished from socialising in local spaces. The British – perhaps particularly the Scottish – attitude towards alcohol proved somewhat different to that of their hosts. While hardly a problem limited either to the British contingent, public drunkenness was an issue that would lead to considerable problems throughout their time in Spain.¹⁵⁷ On occasion, this could actually improve relations with local communities. Tom Clarke, for instance, recalled when visiting Chinchón that

We went away looking for beer but there was none. So we finished up in a little winery or suchlike. The fellows who were working there were eulogising the qualities of the wine and of course we had to sample them. So we sampled ever so many different qualities that night.¹⁵⁸

However, moments of drunken camaraderie with locals seem to have been the exception rather than the rule. Drunkenness was a flaw frequently attributed against individuals such as Daniel Mooney – 'in the front he has a good record' but 'out of the line he is a danger.'¹⁵⁹ This was hardly an uncommon complaint about individuals or groups. Marcovitch recalled another such incident involving a group of Glaswegian volunteers.

They wanted to obtain the use of a lorry in order that the lorry could go into the village and buy some booze. The application was turned down, so a dozen of them commandeered a lorry and... they went into the village and they bought drinks and they went into a trade union club and they wrecked the place.¹⁶⁰

Marcovitch's description is particularly interesting, as it touches on a dichotomy faced by the International Brigade leadership. Positive encounters with locals were to be encouraged, but if the volunteers' own proclivities – especially

¹⁵⁷ This contradicts Daniel Gray's assertion that such incidents were isolated. While it is impossible to know precisely what proportion of the Scottish contingent drank to excess, the Battalion disciplinary records certainly indicate that it was an ongoing issue. Gray, *Homage*, 83–4.

¹⁵⁸ Clarke in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 60.

¹⁵⁹ 'Report on Comrades Being Repatriated', 5 September 1937, MML, Box 39, File A/31.

¹⁶⁰ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

towards drinking – would lead to negative interactions, they needed to be controlled. In Marcovitch's account, the incident stemmed from the decision to make the rank-and-file volunteers camp outside the village, where no wine was available.¹⁶¹ The battalion headquarters, in contrast, was billeted in the village itself, and permitted access to alcohol. While Marcovitch points to this incident to support his broader grievances about differential treatment between officers and men in the British Battalion, the episode also shows how the dynamics of excessive drinking were complex, and the difficulty of finding an effective solution through which the volunteers' desire to 'relax' did not carry a risk of alienating locals. The necessity of preventing difficult incidents was clear, but effectively managing these encounters without causing widespread disaffection among the rank-and-file made the task extremely difficult.

To address this, the leadership used a wide range of tactics to elicit suitable behaviour from the volunteers. Such measures could be quite basic and fundamental, such as a preference during recruitment for volunteers who avoided alcohol, and selecting teetotallers for positions of responsibility whenever possible.¹⁶² Some problems were noted to stem from the thorny old problem of communication – one report noted that the presence of a Cuban company helped considerably when the XV Brigade was recuperating in a village where the locals were already wary of international troops after incidents with a French contingent.¹⁶³ Most often, however, the problem was understood to be one of discipline. Attitudes towards abstention – or at least controlled consumption – from alcohol built on a much longer effort to define an ideal communist morality emphasising self-discipline and control. The 'advanced worker' of Bolshevik propaganda provided a model to which

¹⁶¹ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

¹⁶² For example, Tom Murray's appointment as a 'group leader' in Paris, Tom to Janet Murray, 4 April 1938, NLS, TMP, Box 1, File 1. On recruitment preferences, Burns in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 157.

¹⁶³ 'A Documentary History of the XV Brigade', [1937?], RGASPI, 545/3/471/23. Lisa Kirschenbaum points out that this type of narrative – 'good' volunteers contrasting themselves with (often French or Irish) reprobates is rather self-serving. Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 168.

communists could aspire to live their lives, framing discipline in their personal lives as being as vital as discipline in their politics.¹⁶⁴ Yet the construction of this ideal was difficult to sustain in Spain, in part due to the differing levels of personal commitment to communist values among the volunteers and the lingering strength of ingrained cultural assumptions about working-class masculinities, but also because it was conceived of as an internalised, self-driven process. While in the Soviet Union, where personal and political advancement were strongly linked, this might have proven a sufficient impetus to cultivate a Party elite, for volunteers in Spain who cared little for political advancement in the Party conforming to these ideals held little practical appeal. For such volunteers, this was a small carrot unaccompanied by a stick.

This meant that efforts to instil an appropriately disciplined attitude towards civilians escalated over the course of the conflict, as a series of orders issued throughout 1937 makes clear. The first, published in *Nuestro Combate*, drew heavily on the ideal of the self-disciplined activist, and framed the problem as a need to remind and reinforce their commitment to voluntary discipline.

In our Army discipline is voluntarily accepted AND THIS MUST ALWAYS PREVAIL IN THE 15TH BRIGADE. Up to the present this discipline has been maintained in the face of the enemy and this has meant that Fascism has not passed.

It is true, nevertheless, that some elements have failed to apply this discipline. Some have got drunk, others have refused to carry out duties etc. We must put the question bluntly: Shall we let the cohesion of our forces be shattered by these alien elements? All anti-fascist fighters will answer, emphatically: NO!¹⁶⁵

However, efforts to instil voluntary discipline clearly had limitations, and 'unworthy' incidents in an occupied village resulting in more explicit orders in June 1937:

1. Que todo el personal de la Brigada que se produzca con escándalo en estado de embriaguez por las vías públicas de las poblaciones civiles,

¹⁶⁴ On these attitudes and how they translated to service in Spain, see Kirschenbaum, *International Communism*, 161–71.

¹⁶⁵ *Nuestro Combate*, 8 March 1937.

sea enviado a la Compañía de Trabajo, bajo férrea disciplina, a realizar los trabajos de fortificación de las primeras líneas.

2. Las casos de reincidencia darán lugar a expulsar a los reincidentes del glorioso Ejército al que indignamente pertenecen repatriándolos a sus Países respectivos, previo aviso a las organizaciones Obreras y Partidos Políticos, publicando los motivos de tal medida en los periódicos del Frente Popular de su país.
3. Los que por escándalo sean intimados a entregarse por las patrullas vigilancia, sin hacerlo en el acto, y opongan resistencia a las mismas serán procesados y puestos a disposición del Tribunal de Guerra Popular para ser juzgados severamente de acuerdo con el Código de Justicia Militar.¹⁶⁶

The shift from a voluntary, self-enforced discipline to the direct policing of behaviour is striking, yet still did not get the desired results. Just three months later, the division commander issued even harsher orders against such behaviour, emphasised by the typeset used.

ESPERO QUE TODOS LOS COMPONENTES DE ESTA DIVISION HARAN HONOR A LA HOSPITALIDAD QUE EL PUEBLO NOS OFRECE, RESPETANDO A SUS HABITANTES, EDIFICIOS, GANADO Y PORTANDOSE COMO REQUIEREN LAS MAS ELEMENTALES REGLAS DE EDUCACION Y DELICADEZA. DE LO CONTRARIO ME VERE OBLIGADO A IMPONER SANCIONES GRAVES QUE PUEDAN LLEGAR HASTA EL FUSILAMIENTO IMMEDIATO.¹⁶⁷

The escalation of disciplinary measures across 1937 points to the inherent difficulty of shaping interactions between soldiers and civilians. It also exposed

¹⁶⁶ Trans: '1. That all personnel of the Brigade who are found in a scandalous state of drunkenness in the streets of civilian areas will be sent to the Work Company, under strict discipline, to carry out fortification work in the front lines. 2. Cases of recidivism will result in their expulsion from this glorious Army to which they belong and dishonourably repatriating them to their respective countries, after giving notice to Workers Organisations and Political Parties and publishing the reasons in the newspapers of the Popular Front of their country. 3. Those who are asked to surrender by surveillance patrols, and who do not do so on the spot, and offer resistance to the same, will be processed and placed at the disposal of the People's Tribunal of War to be judged severely in accordance with the Military Code of Justice.' Orders from Estado Mayor, XV Brigade, 18 June 1937, AGMA, C.4129,4.

¹⁶⁷ Trans: 'I HOPE THAT ALL COMPONENTS OF THIS DIVISION WILL HONOUR THE HOSPITALITY GIVEN TO US BY THE VILLAGE, WITH RESPECT TO THE INHABITANTS, BUILDINGS AND LIVESTOCK, AND BEHAVING AS REQUIRED BY THE MOST BASIC RULES OF EDUCATION AND REFINEMENT. OTHERWISE, I SHALL BE FORCED TO IMPOSE THE MOST SERIOUS SANCTIONS, UP TO BEING SUMMARILY SHOT.' Orden General del Día, 10 September 1938, RGASPI, 545/3/2/14.

the limitations of a positive approach, especially for those present at the bloodbaths at Jarama and Brunete that year, and for whom appeals to voluntary discipline might be met by cynicism. Such harsh orders should be interpreted as a sign of desperation, not ruthlessness. As discussed in the previous chapter, the British Battalion was generally unwilling to actually impose discipline through harsh punishment, and no Scots were 'summarily shot' for offences committed in civilian areas.

In the realm of civil crimes, rape was taken particularly seriously. Aside from its inherent heinousness, it was a crime with the potential to irreparably damage relations with local communities. However, it is difficult to say how many such cases there were among the Scots. The only confirmed incident was that of James Queen, 'one of the worst' volunteers.¹⁶⁸ The ambiguity found in Queen's file, however, makes it difficult to be certain that his was the only such case. Several documents reference only unspecified 'scandalous' conduct that led to his expulsion from the International Brigades and a sentence in a labour camp, while others are more explicit in labelling his crime as rape or attempted rape.¹⁶⁹ Alec Marcovitch mentioned the case, confirming that one 'MacQueen' was shot or otherwise heavily punished for rape.¹⁷⁰ However, perhaps unsurprisingly such topics were rarely broached in other interviews, leaving the possibility that further cases remain obscured by euphemistic language.

A similar crime led to the only occasion on which the Scots observed severe punishment being carried out for non-military offences. Several Yugoslavian volunteers were convicted of raping a local woman. Alec Ferguson described what happened after the court martial.

They lined these four up against the wall and six men stood in front of them and shot them, well this young Jewish boy was sick, and this miner, he was a good lad he came from Cowdenbeath, was a member of the party, he thought they'd been unjustly dealt with for a thing like that, when they were drunk, you know, 'cos he liked a drink and he said

¹⁶⁸ 'QUEEN, James', 2 August 1937, RGASPI, 545/6/189/8.

¹⁶⁹ 'QUEEN, James', RGASPI, 545/6/189/3-10.

¹⁷⁰ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

‘drunk people do things on the spur of the moment.’ I said ‘Drunk people can’t afford to do things on the spur of the moment in a struggle like this’... but he went up to the officers and called them all bastards that he could lay his tongue to, so they put him in jail for a couple of days.¹⁷¹

Ferguson’s testimony highlights the conflicting attitudes among volunteers regarding discipline and the civil population. It is clear that from the perspective of the leadership, assuaging concerns among locals that such behaviour would not be tolerated was a clear priority – as Ferguson recalled, Spaniards as well as internationals were required to witness the execution, doubtless with an eye to demonstrating that their comrades were not above the basic laws of the land.¹⁷² Yet at least some rank-and-file volunteers clearly had different ideas about their position in Spain. For them, drunken behaviour, and the consequences it brought, was a natural outlet for the stress of serving in combat, and perhaps even a right that had been earned by the volunteers. Harsh punishment for drunken acts, in this mindset, was breaking unwritten conditions of service. Just as sex was seen as a rightful preserve of fighters but a sign of moral decay for shirkers, a drunk in the rear was contemptible but veterans of the front had earned the right to ‘blow off steam’. The existence and persistence of such attitudes – here from a ‘good lad’ with standing in the Communist Party, no less – implies that some volunteers saw the needs of the civil population as ranking well below theirs, and believed that military service rendered them to some extent immune to the normal constraints of civil society.

It would be entirely unfair to ascribe such views to the majority of volunteers, and even those who thought of recreational drinking and sex as being their right as combatants likely did not rationalise their needs as coming at the civil population’s expense. Yet it is nonetheless indicative of a conceptual gulf between the volunteers and the locals, despite all the efforts directed towards bringing the two groups together. For many volunteers, the ‘Spanish people’ were an abstraction – a framework through which their positive encounters could be understood, and negative encounters rationalised. Breaking through

¹⁷¹ Ferguson, Tape 239.

¹⁷² Ferguson, Tape 239.

this barrier could be difficult, with the battalion often on the move, and rarely visiting the same town or village twice. This meant that volunteers' preconceived notions of the 'Spanish people' often went unchallenged to a surprising extent, and their relationships with locals often proceeded along the lines of their expectations. The result could be a conflation of lived experience and preconceived notions about the 'Spanish character'. William Gilmour drew upon what appear to be preconceived notions about Spanish laziness and inefficiency while recovering from wounds, protesting the 'vague excuses and elusive promises' received from the Spanish authorities, glumly concluding that '*mañana* is the most used word in the Spanish vocabulary.'¹⁷³ Yet just months earlier, in better times, he effusively praised the Madrid authorities' efficiency in responding to artillery attacks.¹⁷⁴ Here, his expectations were shaped less by racial notions of Spanishness than the nature of a popular anti-fascist struggle. For Gilmour, as with others, the 'Spanish people' was as much a political construction as a racial one.

Conclusions

Maintaining good relationships between foreigners and Spaniards was a far more difficult task than many historians have assumed. For the International Brigades' leaders, the challenge was to manage the competing demands of maintaining morale and cohesion in difficult circumstances on one hand, and the political necessity of positive relations with Spanish soldiers and civilians on the other. They were aided greatly by the willingness of the volunteers to project their own desires and expectations onto the Spaniards they met. However, the complexities of the situation in Spain could always intrude on such comfortable understandings. Whether it was the slow starvation of the civil population, the shifting political attitudes across different locales or friction between the needs of soldiers and civilians, volunteers were on occasion forced

¹⁷³ Gilmour to Paterson, 20 March 1938, MML, Box 50, File Gl/36.

¹⁷⁴ Gilmour to Paterson, 14 May 1937, MML, Box 50, File Gl/21.

to implicitly or explicitly reassess their views of the 'Spanish people'. This was not necessarily a bad thing, and could point to volunteers deepening their own understandings of Spain and their role there. Yet by the same measure, it means that simplistic assessments of the volunteers' relations with locals – such as Daniel Gray's view that 'rarely before or since were foreign soldiers so welcome in another country's war' – also need to be reassessed.¹⁷⁵ These relationships were complicated, and covered a much wider spectrum than wholehearted welcome.

It is equally important to acknowledge, however, that these issues were addressed or ameliorated in several ways. The function of the political leadership needs to be understood in broader terms than as the enforcers of Stalinist norms. Many Political Commissars clearly saw their jobs in terms of alleviating practical issues affecting morale, including those caused by mixed units of international and Spanish troops. Moreover, there was awareness of the problems caused by the ways of thinking described here – most commonly described as 'chauvinism' – on the part of the volunteers.¹⁷⁶ Such ways of thinking were framed as abhorrent to socialist ideals, and firmly discouraged. Ultimately, as the persistence of these issues shows, this was never enough to solve these problems for good. Such political work was always fragile in the International Brigades, with the turnover in personnel due to casualties, not to mention accompanying blows to morale, ensuring that any successes tended to be temporary. Even so, volunteers were likely correct in their comparisons with 'imperialist' armies: the International Brigades were better equipped to address underlying problems than their more traditional counterparts.

Friction between ordinary soldiers of all nationalities was often minimal, not least because it was apparent that each group shared hardships, and organisational problems could hardly be laid at the door of rank-and-file soldiers. Ironically, the language difficulties that helped fuel resentment and

¹⁷⁵ Gray, *Homage*, 84.

¹⁷⁶ Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers*, 46–8. This was reflected in the language of the volunteers, e.g. Arthur Nicoll, TLS, MS, Tape 956.

military ineffectiveness and impeded relationships with civilians may have had the unanticipated benefit of smoothing relations between the international volunteers and their hosts. Unable to express complex grievances to one another, such interactions were by necessity extremely limited yet generally positive – while there was a mutual vocabulary of words and symbols that allowed them to express solidarity across the linguistic divide, this represented the practical limits of communication for most Scottish volunteers. Yet this limited spectrum of exchanges should not be underestimated. For many Scots, the tangible expressions of solidarity with Spanish soldiers and civilians evoked an intensely emotional response. As they departed Spain, with the sights and sounds of grateful Barcelona crowds impressed into their memories, there was correspondingly little space for doubting the righteousness of their cause or their decision to volunteer.

Section Three: There, and Back Again

Chapter Six: 'Premature Anti-fascists'?

The Scottish volunteers returned home to a hero's welcome in December 1938 – crowds met their trains in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, and smaller gatherings took place throughout the country.¹ Yet despite the celebration of the volunteers by their peers, the British state did not share this enthusiasm. They had fought for a foreign government; in a conflict the British Government had attempted to avoid. Their participation in the Spanish Civil War was certainly against the spirit of the Foreign Enlistment Act (1870), even if actual prosecution proved difficult.² Moreover, having demonstrated a willingness to fight and die for ideological beliefs considered anathema by the British political establishment, their future loyalties were murky at best.³ With the outbreak of war against Germany less than a year later, this question was thrown into stark relief: to what extent could these individuals be admitted as trustworthy or reliable participants in the British war effort?

The post-Spain trajectory of the International Brigade volunteers has often been neglected in a British context.⁴ Insofar as this question has been addressed, Scottish and British accounts have reflected a trans-Atlantic dual narrative about the ex-International Brigaders' role in the Second World War.⁵ One strand

¹ Daniel Gray, *Homage to Caledonia* (Edinburgh, 2008), 202–4.

² S. P. Mackenzie, 'The Foreign Enlistment Act and the Spanish Civil War', *Twentieth Century British History* 10:1 (1999), 52–66.

³ On Spain and postwar British politics, Tom Buchanan, *The Impact of the Spanish Civil War in Britain* (Brighton, 2007), 178–83.

⁴ Notably, the subject is largely absent in James Hopkins, *Into the Heart of the Fire* (Stanford, 1998) or Richard Baxell, *British Volunteers* (London, 2004). While Tom Buchanan deals with the activities of the International Brigades Association, volunteers' wartime experiences are considered only in passing. Tom Buchanan, 'Holding the line: the political strategy of the International Brigade Association, 1939–1977', *Labour History Review* 66:3 (2001), 294–312.

⁵ Bill Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty* (London, 1982), 256–7, Gray, *Homage*, 205–8; Richard Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors* (London, 2012), 417–48; Ben Hughes, *They Shall Not Pass!*

of this narrative emphasises continuity, with those brave few who had first recognised the fascist menace leaping at the chance to continue their struggle. They had lost the battle in Spain, but now hoped to win the war by joining a truly global anti-fascist conflict.⁶ Many Scots' wartime experiences and exploits conform to this broader narrative of heroic contribution, although they are not the focus here.⁷ Instead, this chapter deals with the other narrative strand. Here, the story is one of victimisation and wasted potential. Despite their experience in modern warfare, and clear dedication to combatting fascism, the state shunned their offers of help. Rather, the government chose to mistrust and mistreat them, monitoring their activities and introducing policies that restricted their participation in the war effort, particularly when it came to joining the armed forces. In the words of Francis Beckett,

As the war approached, MI5 seems to have devoted a lot of time to compiling information about the International Brigades in Spain, and lists of those who fought in them. Some were blocked when they tried to get into the British army, others found their promotion blocked. In this way the British intelligence service deprived the army of the most battle-hardened anti-Nazis the country possessed.⁸

The term 'premature anti-fascists' seeks to capture the absurdity of such a situation – that individuals who had recognised the danger of fascism the earliest were somehow trusted least to fight against it later. The phrase itself has murky origins. The United States Government allegedly used it as a label for Spanish veterans to indicate their tainted loyalties, although some scholars claim that the term was fabricated.⁹ Despite this, and its specificity to the

(Oxford, 2011), 222–7. For other trans-Atlantic contexts, see Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver, 2008), 174–7; Peter Carroll, *Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (Stanford, 1994), 250–64.

⁶ This shift had its own tensions, particularly between what Seidman describes as 'revolutionary' and 'counterrevolutionary' anti-fascisms, the divisions between which were most apparent in 1939–40. Michael Seidman, *Transatlantic Antifascisms* (Cambridge, 2017), esp. 105–29.

⁷ Examples can be found in Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 433–48; Gray, *Homage*, 205–8.

⁸ Francis Beckett, *Enemy Within: Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party* (London, 1995), 80–1.

⁹ Notably, while questioning the phrase's etymology, this critique does not challenge the suggestion that American ex-volunteers faced discrimination. John Haynes and Harvey Klehr, 'The myth of "premature antifascism"', *New Criterion* 21:1 (2002), 19–26. For a response and

American context, the term has come to be widely associated with the International Brigade veterans in North America and elsewhere, becoming adopted as a label of ironic pride.¹⁰ In Britain, while scholars have usually – though not always – been wary of using the term directly, the same underlying narrative of wide-scale victimisation remains accepted.¹¹ Yet efforts to explain how these twin narratives can be reconciled – how, in other words, ex-volunteers could be both widely excluded yet also heroic participants – have remained piecemeal. Tom Buchanan noted that discrimination was haphazard, but did not seek to either establish its scale or explain why it was so variable.¹² Bill Alexander posited instead that the volunteers were able to participate thanks to discrimination being overcome through ‘political pressure at all levels’, with ‘Brigaders forcing their way into the war effort’, but does little to establish either the basis or scale of discrimination, or allow for examples that do not fit this chronology.¹³ Only Richard Baxell has dealt with the question in any depth, although, as shall be seen, his analysis had important limitations, and concludes only that discrimination lessened over the course of the war.¹⁴ In addressing these issues, this account comes to quite different conclusions: principally, that these twin narratives can be reconciled as discrimination specifically against International Brigade veterans did not occur on the scale imagined, and that their experiences were generally similar to others associated with the Communist Party.

reaffirmation of the narrative, see Peter Carroll, *From Guernica to Human Rights: Essays on the Spanish Civil War* (Kent, 2015), esp. 123–36.

¹⁰ It has been used across scholarly, popular and commemorative contexts, e.g. Gerben Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2017), p. 147; John Gerassi, *The Premature Antifascists: North American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–39* (Philadelphia, 1986); Humphrey McQueen, ‘Premature anti-fascists’, 4 December 2016 [online], < <http://surplusvalue.org.au/McQueen/film/Premature%20anti.pdf>>, accessed 15 November 2017.

¹¹ For use in a British context, see Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 417 and *British Volunteers*, 149; Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty*, 258. Stradling, despite his generally critical approach, uses the term in relation to British participants without complication several times in Robert Stradling, *History and Legend: Writing the International Brigades* (Cardiff, 2003), 27, 95, 208n.

¹² Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 1997), 191.

¹³ Alexander, *British Volunteers for Liberty*, 246–7.

¹⁴ Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors* (London, 2012), 417–48.

Beyond establishing more precisely the scale, causes and nature of discrimination against International Brigade veterans during the Second World War, this chapter sheds light on a neglected aspect of the CPGB's wartime history. While Communist Party attitudes towards the war have been dissected in considerable detail, much less attention has been paid either to the experience of rank-and-file activists or the Party's involvement in the armed forces.¹⁵ Noreen Branson provides a partial exception, giving overviews of Communist Party organisation in the armed forces, and sketching the extent of discrimination against Party members. Branson, however, is notably uncritical of the Party, and does little to examine the state's perspective or establish the extent of discrimination beyond specific examples.¹⁶ This lack of attention is especially striking when considering the rich body of work on the lived experience of communism in community, family and industrial spheres.¹⁷ As such, in arguing that the International Brigade volunteers were not especial targets of state intervention during the Second World War, this account contends that the International Brigade veterans' experiences shed considerable light on broader communist experiences of military service. This insight is particularly valuable given the uneven preservation of source material. Thanks to the survival of security records relating specifically to the International Brigades and the efforts made to collect and preserve their experiences, the Spanish veterans offer a more diverse array of sources and

¹⁵ See, for example, discussion focusing on the Party's political response to the war in James Eaden and David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920* (Basingstoke, 2002); Neil Redfern, *Class or Nation: Communists, Imperialism and Two World Wars* (London, 2005). In contrast, Morgan and Thorpe do more to integrate the perspective of the British state, but touch infrequently on how state policy affected members of the Party, as opposed to the Party itself. Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and continuities in British Communist politics, 1935–41* (Manchester, 1989), 235–42; Andrew Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920–43* (Manchester, 2000), 264–7.

¹⁶ Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927–41* (London, 1985), 307–8 and *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1941–51* (London, 1997), 50–61.

¹⁷ Perhaps because it eschews a traditional political approach and chronology, the Second World War rarely emerges from the background of the best single account of the lived experience of British communism, Morgan, Cohen and Flinn, *Communists and British Society, 1920–1991* (London, 2007). Other such accounts have excluded the war years, e.g. Matthew Worley, *Class Against Class* (London, 2002); Thomas Linehan, *Communism in Britain: 1920–39* (Manchester, 2007).

perspectives than is available for British communists more generally. Aside from revising historical understandings of the post-Civil War trajectory of British International Brigade volunteers, this account offers insight into the wartime relationship between communism and the British Government, as well as a precursor to post-war transatlantic efforts to crack down on perceived communist enemies within during the early stages of the Cold War.¹⁸

The advent of war in September 1939 came to define the volunteers' relationship with the British state. Yet this was far from the only encounter between the volunteers and British officials. The first section of this chapter argues that understanding the ex-volunteers' treatment during the Second World War requires appreciating two interrelated contexts: the encounters between British officials and International Brigade volunteers during the Spanish Civil War, and policy towards the Communist Party during the Second World War. Both suggest that individuals' status as International Brigade veterans was only ever a secondary concern. This is confirmed in the second section through an analysis of Security Service activity during the war, showing that British authorities settled upon a softer approach, with non-intervention, ironically, being the preferred option. Yet it is also clear that the treatment received by individual veterans was highly variable, and the third section explores how the limitations of British intelligence services, bureaucratic failings and differing institutional understandings of communism led to uneven implementation of policy.

¹⁸ The link with postwar anti-communism is made in several accounts, notably Helen Graham, *The War and its Shadow: Spain's Civil War in Europe's Long Twentieth Century* (Brighton, 2012), 92–3; Lisa Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2015), 192–5. Despite the value of both texts, both assume consistency in anti-communist cultures across Atlantic contexts, and neither seeks to complicate ex-volunteers' own narratives about victimisation.

The British Government, Communism and the International Brigades

Given the close relationship between the International Brigades and the Communist Party, it is problematic to look at policy towards the ex-volunteers in isolation from the broader policy towards the CPGB and its members. This chapter complements Richard Thurlow's account of wartime policy towards the CPGB, although with important differences given the emphasis here on the treatment of individuals rather than the Party.¹⁹ Thurlow notes the striking fact that the CPGB was a legal entity throughout the Second World War, with liberal traditions of free association combined with the Party's marginal status in British politics leading to a 'live and let live' approach.²⁰ Even in 1940-1, when the impetus to enact broad repressive measures against subversive elements was strongest, this approach remained consistent. However, this did not preclude action against individual communists or managing their access to sensitive areas of state activity, nor did it preclude specific actions, or banning specific publications deemed to be prejudicial to the war effort, notably the Communist paper, the *Daily Worker*.²¹ Drawing on wartime policy documents generated by the Security Service and other 'secret state' institutions, this

¹⁹ Richard Thurlow, "A very clever capitalist class": British communism and state surveillance 1939-45', *Intelligence and National Security* 12:2 (1997), 1-21. There is limited other literature dealing with such questions, with most histories of MI5 concentrating on the more glamorous counterespionage cases. Discussing wartime treatment of British Fascists, Jennifer Grant points to the institutional factors working in favour of individual suspects. Roderick Bailey's study of James Klugmann also suggests that British intelligence were far from indiscriminate or draconian. Jennifer Grant, 'The Role of MI5 in the Internment of British Fascists during the Second World War', *Intelligence and National Security* 24:4 (2009), 499-528; Roderick Bailey, 'Communist in SOE: Explaining James Klugmann's Recruitment and Retention', *Intelligence and National Security* 20:1 (2005), 72-97. Possibly due to the greater scale of archival releases, surveillance of 'friendly aliens', generally political refugees from Axis countries, has received more recent attention than the treatment of domestic communists, e.g. Daniel Münzner, 'The surveillance of friends: MI5 and friendly aliens during the Second World War', *Journal of Intelligence History* 13:2 (2014), 131-43; Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove, *A Matter of Intelligence: MI5 and the surveillance of anti-Nazi refugees, 1933-50* (Manchester, 2014).

²⁰ Thurlow, "A very clever capitalist class", 1. For a broader account of anti-communist policy over the interwar period, see Jennifer Luff, 'Covert and Overt Operations: Interwar Political Policing in the United States and the United Kingdom', *American Historical Review* 122:3 (2017), 742-752.

²¹ The January 1941 ban was in response to the 'People's Convention' organised by the CPGB and, it was perceived, enabled by the *Daily Worker*. Thurlow, "A very clever capitalist class", pp. 13-14.

section contends that the key aim of security policy was to efficiently control the involvement of individual communists in the war effort, with security measures balanced against public perception and manpower shortages.

While the CPGB itself was consistently viewed as a threat, British intelligence generally held that the bulk of members did not subscribe fully to the Party's aims or share its allegiance to Moscow, and adhered to the Party out of appreciation for its immediate anti-fascist agenda and effective critique of British society. From this perspective, only the hard core of Party leaders and activists, who were aware of and accepted the Party's role as agents of international communism, posed significant security risks.²² This, of course, was a function of official perception rather than reality, with individual communists' loyalties generally being more complex than this simple binary allowed. Nonetheless, this belief was engrained in official mindsets – even those who argued for greater repressive measures against the CPGB did so from this standpoint.²³ Equally, it was appreciated that seemingly unjustified measures were likely to increase the Communist Party's legitimacy and popularity among the British left.²⁴ Taking the long view that communist success depended on material conditions in Britain, and that the state was best served by starving the Party of exposure and legitimacy, British intelligence generally counselled against active suppression of the Communist Party.²⁵ This was in stark contrast to the repression of the BUF, who were perceived as likely 'fifth columnists' in the event of invasion and thereby legitimate targets for preventative internment.²⁶

In practice, communists still faced state interference, but this was generally based on specific rather than speculative or pre-emptive grounds. The emphasis was on monitoring and acting against individuals or groups actually engaged in

²² E.g. Untitled Memo, [January 1941?], TNA, KV 4/265/17b.

²³ See, for instance, a memorandum arguing for new laws composed by Lord Swinton, 'Communist Activities', 28 January 1941, TNA, KV 4/265/16a.

²⁴ A 'most unfortunate reaction' was anticipated if 'repressive action were taken against the Communist Party', HD(S)E, 10 July 1940, also 'Circular 30', 3 July 1940, TNA, KV 4/265.

²⁵ E.g., 'The Communist Party', 3 August 1940, KV 4/265/11a.

²⁶ 'Circular 30', 3 July 1940, TNA; Grant, 'Role of MI5', 502–3.

criminal or subversive activity.²⁷ The advent of the war itself provided a convenient watershed by which to make distinctions between those requiring careful management and surveillance and those who did not. The Security Service was aware of the inner-Party turmoil caused by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and the resulting line that the war was between imperialist nations and therefore to be opposed.²⁸ While the result of these debates only strengthened official perceptions of the CPGB as subservient to Moscow, it was considered that many rank-and-file members, especially those animated by a spirit of anti-fascism, would still be willing to participate in the war effort or at least not actively impede it.²⁹ As such, members who did not actively embrace the Party line of opposing the 'imperialist war' warranted little concern.

Mid-1941 offers a particularly useful moment for understanding British policy towards communist participation in the war effort, as the invasion of the Soviet Union prompted reassessment of current practice. The Home Defence (Security) Executive (HD(S)E), the interdepartmental body coordinating domestic security, hosted a particularly insightful discussion.³⁰ It emerged that policy 'since the introduction of conscription' was

To take into the Forces rank and file members of the Party, but to arrange, by administrative action between the Security Service and the Ministry of Labour, that those members of the Party whose record showed them to have been active and troublesome in the past should not be called up.³¹

Policy, in other words, still stemmed from the view that communists might be divided into a harmless majority and dangerous revolutionary minority, with the former allowed to participate in the war effort. Although there were only 'between 20 and 30' individuals wholly rejected for service, the potential for

²⁷ 'The Communist Party', 3 August 1940. This was frequently reiterated, especially to the police, e.g. R. Hollis, Circular No. 254, 9 February 1941, KV 4/265/20a.

²⁸ Thurlow, "A very clever capitalist class", 4-7.

²⁹ 'ADNI for Commander Carmichael', 19 February 1941, TNA, KV 4/265/21a.

³⁰ On the HD(SE)'s background, see Thurlow, "A very clever capitalist class", 2.

³¹ 'Appendix II - The Communist Party', HD(S)E Minutes, 9 July 1941, KV 4/265. Similar continuities were visible in munitions factories, where 'a normal measure of security steps have been taken for some years to exclude Communists from pivotal positions.' Hollis to Home Office, 28 January 1941, TNA, KV 4/265/17a.

even one such case to substantiate CPGB claims that manpower was being wasted was considered grounds to revisit this policy.³² This acted to reinforce efforts to shift troublesome activists from industry to the armed forces, 'where they would probably cause less trouble' and there was 'greater opportunities for control and possible reformation.'³³ However, while the HD(S)E concluded that the Army should consider amending their approach, this was conceived as expanding rather than upending existing policy. While cases had previously been considered on their individual merits only 'in the sense that it had to be decided how far each man should be regarded as an active and trained Party member', assessments would now take into account broader factors in evaluating an individual's suitability for the armed forces.³⁴ While the changed situation, and the CPGB's new pro-war line, certainly did not convince the Security Service that previously-suspect individuals were now trustworthy, it did alter the criteria on which their participation in the war should be based.

This meant that even following the invasion of the Soviet Union, there was continuity in anti-communist policy, which focused on troublesome individuals rather than sweeping measures. This continuity was informed by the Security Service's judgement that despite the CPGB's newfound enthusiasm for the war effort, their overarching goal of revolutionary change at the behest of Moscow had not changed, and their manoeuvring in support of the war effort had ulterior motives.³⁵ This view patently stemmed from institutionalised anti-communism, with senior intelligence officials clearly prepared to see the worst in any communist initiative, assuming conspiratorial intent behind every action

³² Appendix II – The Communist Party, 9 July 1941. This number was later confirmed as being 28, out of 60 cases from all 'subversive' organisations. Home Defence Committee Minutes, 11 and 25 August 1941, TNA, CAB 93/5.

³³ Appendix II – The Communist Party, 9 July 1941; 'War-time Control of Communism – General', 9 June 1941, TNA, KV 4/265/39b.

³⁴ Appendix II – The Communist Party, 9 July 1941, TNA.

³⁵ E.g. Roger Hollis, Appendix B of Minutes of Conference of RSLs, 26–7 August 1941, TNA, KV 4/266/62c. This was informed by analysis presented in 'The Communist Party of Great Britain and the Attack on Russia', 11 July 1941, TNA, KV 4/265, and further developed into a document circulated to the highest levels of government, including Churchill. TNA, PREM 4/64/5B.

or policy.³⁶ However, it must be allowed that private utterances from senior Party figures provided ample basis for reconfirming the Security Service's own prejudices.³⁷ Ultimately, the subjective judgement as to whether this approach was justified rests on the extent that the CPGB should be considered as either a legitimate domestic political movement, or agents of a hostile foreign power. While the Security Service undeniably embraced the latter view with little nuance, considering that this basic debate continues to animate historians, it was a somewhat understandable institutional failing.³⁸

The consistent intent of wartime policy can therefore be summarised as attempting to distinguish between the bulk of communists who were considered relatively harmless, and those for whom restrictions were deemed necessary. These restrictions could take the form of assigning them to secondary military duties, or refusing their involvement in the war effort altogether. However, it should not necessarily be assumed that International Brigade veterans were treated in the same way as other communists. Particularly before the invasion of the Soviet Union, when the main security assessment was whether an individual had sufficient training and motivation to pose a threat, International Brigade volunteers might easily have been assumed to automatically meet this threshold. Not only had they taken up arms in – arguably – a revolutionary cause, they had been exposed at length to communist propaganda and training.

Yet such a differentiated approach was an unlikely outcome of official encounters with the volunteers. The nature of these encounters consistently acted to exaggerate rather than hide the extent that a substantial minority of

³⁶ Thurlow, "A very clever capitalist class", 2–3.

³⁷ In a rather circular instance, William Robson was recorded justifying Security Service towards the CPGB: 'joining the CP means that a man's first loyalty is to the Party, not to the Government', 'ours is regarded as a body guided mainly from Moscow', also pointing to their role in enabling Soviet espionage and noting that 'they know that when we do something, it is not innocent – it is done deliberately.' Robson and Joyce, 19 November 1942, TNA, KV 3/387. For a selection of other instances, see Hollis to Hoare, 24 July 1941, TNA, HO 45/25573.

³⁸ It is not intended to enter into this debate here, the basis of which can be found in various exchanges in *Labour History Review* 68–9 (2003–4).

volunteers had grown hostile, disillusioned or indifferent towards the Communist Party, as discussed in Chapter Four. How significant any given interaction was for the development of security policy is uncertain – especially as Foreign Office representatives tended to have the most frequent direct contact. However, diplomatic encounters are occasionally cross-referenced in surviving Security Service files, indicating that diplomatic reports did reach them.³⁹ More broadly, metadata indicates a single-direction flow of information from the Foreign Office to Security Service. While over two hundred volunteers appear in Security Service records but not Foreign Office records, the reverse is true for fewer than fifteen individuals.⁴⁰

For many volunteers, the only direct contact with security personnel came when they were interviewed on their return to Britain. Their responses varied markedly, sometimes denying having fought in Spain or being Party members, sometimes openly admitting both.⁴¹ The only confirmed contact between British intelligence and the volunteers in Spain came following the capture of several dozen Britons at the Battle of Jarama.⁴² The Nationalists permitted Brigadier Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott, a descendant of Sir Walter Scott, to view the prisoners during his personal fact-finding mission in their territory. As revealed in Security Service records, his visit was actually at the behest of British intelligence, and he provided reports on the British International Brigaders he interviewed.⁴³ While the secret reports are not available, his public commentary have been aptly described as ‘dotty’ by Judith Keene.⁴⁴ Maxwell-Scott’s hostility towards those he interviewed, however dotty, can be surmised by his politics.

³⁹ E.g. ‘GILMOUR, William Dieter: SB Report re Spanish matters’, 24 October 1938, TNA, KV 2/3979/42.

⁴⁰ See Appendix A.

⁴¹ Edward Mathers, for instance, admitted fighting in Spain but not his membership of the CPGB, while George Stark denied even having fought. ‘MATHERS, Edward’ and ‘STARK, George’, TNA, KV 5/127,130.

⁴² Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 109–12.

⁴³ E.g. ‘BLOOMFIELD, Thomas Jarvis’, TNA, KV 5/118.

⁴⁴ Judith Keene, *Fighting For Franco: International Volunteers in nationalist Spain, 1936–39* (London, 2001), 59.

He was instrumental in founding a Scottish branch of the Friends of Nationalist Spain in early 1938, with his wife serving as a speaker.⁴⁵

Foreign Office officials had a much broader range of encounters with the volunteers, all of which were in circumstances likely to highlight the scale of internal divisions and disillusionment. Visiting prisoners of war, for instance, was likely to evoke pity rather than fear.⁴⁶ Deserters certainly evoked strong negative reactions, with Foreign Office representatives vowing to avoid future dealings with what they considered as burdensome 'thugs' or 'misguided stiff' who they were 'saddled with.'⁴⁷ Foreign Office representatives also came into contact with individuals being repatriated, who were forced to sign forms promising to repay the cost of repatriation to the Foreign Office before assistance was granted.⁴⁸ Even unwounded volunteers became frustrated and demoralised at the endless delays to repatriation, particularly in the final months of 1938, after their withdrawal had been announced but not yet effected.⁴⁹ When they finally did cross the border, diplomatic reports explicitly differentiated between 'leaders' and 'men.'

Mr Wild, and his assistant Cooney, took violent objection to being given food by the Salvation Army, shouting, 'Send this food to Spain'; all my efforts to induce them to adopt a reasonable attitude were in vain... If it had not been for the leaders the men, I feel certain, would have had no objection.⁵⁰

The Foreign Office, as well as MPs, also received a steady stream of correspondence from the volunteers' friends and families.⁵¹ These letters had a

⁴⁵ *Glasgow Observer*, 29 January 1938, 1; *Glasgow Herald*, 21 April 1938, 8.

⁴⁶ E.g. 'Christmas gifts for British prisoners in Spain' December 1938, TNA, FO 371/24122/22. For an account of British diplomacy in Spain, see Tom Buchanan, 'Edge of Darkness: British 'Front-Line' Diplomacy in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1937', *Contemporary European History* 12:3 (2003), esp. 290-2.

⁴⁷ Correspondence between British Consulate, Madrid and British Consulate, Valencia, April-May 1937, TNA, FO 889/2/81-118.

⁴⁸ A large collection of these undertakings can be found in TNA, FO 369/2514/84-269.

⁴⁹ Fred Thomas, *To Tilt at Windmills* (East Lansing, 1996), 168. This issue recurred throughout the conflict, Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 138-9.

⁵⁰ H. J. Dorey, 'Repatriation of British Volunteers from Spain', 13 December 1938, TNA, FO 369/2514/236.

⁵¹ A broad sample is found in TNA. FO 371/24122-4.

variety of purposes – seeking information, confirming whether loved ones were alive or dead or asking for diplomatic intervention on behalf of prisoners. Such letters were careful to downplay political associations, framing volunteers as British subjects first and foremost, in the hope of presenting them as deserving objects of official intervention.⁵² Even volunteers' own private responses to the Foreign Office contrasted with public statements, particularly when it came to the thorny issue of repatriation costs. While several indignant responses to Foreign Office demands are well known, others, such as Joseph Hughes', were more conciliatory, with Hughes claiming that he was 'unemployed at the moment', but if 'I got a job I will repay the money I owe.'⁵³ While another impression might be gleaned from some secondary texts, returned volunteers were not uniformly defiant.⁵⁴

It is uncertain how much attention the Security Service paid to diplomatic reports, or even whether such reports could fundamentally sway their attitudes. This, however, is precisely the point – there was little impetus from these or other reports that would prompt officials to view the International Brigade veterans as a qualitatively different threat than other communists or their associates. Most encounters during the civil war reinforced rather than challenged the view that some were dangerous and others were mostly harmless. This view is supported by small asides in Security Service records, such as a note confirming that 'membership of the International Brigade Association (IBA) by no means denotes membership of the Communist Party', indicating an appreciation that International Brigaders were not a monolithic bloc.⁵⁵ Bureaucratic inertia likely also mitigated against the creation of a special category of communist; so long as the Security Service and other interested parties were content to deal with individuals on a case-by-case basis, there would need to be a strong rationale to introduce exceptions. While it may have been possible to formulate such a rationale, the absence of wartime documents

⁵² E.g. Marcovitch to Lord Halifax, 29 January 1939, TNA, FO 371/24122/223-4.

⁵³ 'Repatriation expenses of Joseph Hughes', 24 December 1938, TNA, FO 369/2514/222-3.

⁵⁴ E.g. Gray, *Homage*, 204.

⁵⁵ W. O. Gilvie, Memorandum, 16 November 1941, TNA, KV 5/46/25a.

promoting such an approach, combined with the actual effects of the policy discussed below, indicate that International Brigade veterans tended to be treated in the same way as others linked Communist Party.

Non-Intervention?

Although policy towards communist participation in the war effort can be traced throughout the war years, the same cannot be said of International Brigade veterans. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, however, at least one document exists showing that they were considered to be especial risks. In January 1939 instructions were issued to Territorial Army Recruiting Officers, outlining how ex-International Brigade volunteers were to be dealt with.⁵⁶ Allowing that some 'may have returned to this country disillusioned', there was held to be 'no doubt that the majority of them have returned strongly imbued with revolutionary sentiments.'⁵⁷ Any International Brigade veteran who applied was to be 'referred to the Security Service for investigation', while any found to have already enlisted would be kept under 'quiet observation' until they could be investigated.⁵⁸ While the goal was explicitly not to 'prevent any man who had served in the International Brigades from serving in the British Army', they aimed to ensure that no one was admitted 'who had become imbued with revolutionary ideas which would render his presence in the ranks undesirable.'⁵⁹

This document has been vital in informing recent historical understandings of government policy. According to Richard Baxell, it left relatively broad leeway for interpretation, and as such could provide bureaucratic grounds for the wholesale rejection of 'a large number of men precisely because they were

⁵⁶ A copy is enclosed in TNA, KV 2/609, as it was relevant to that case. It is unclear whether similar instructions were issued to other service branches.

⁵⁷ 'Internal Security Instructions 1933 and 1937', January 1939, TNA, KV 2/609/42a.

⁵⁸ 'Internal Security Instructions 1933 and 1937', January 1939, TNA.

⁵⁹ Untitled note, 22 May 1939, TNA, KV 2/609/37.

former International Brigaders.’⁶⁰ This intent might be inferred from the preamble, which clearly stated that a majority were dangerous revolutionaries. This was perhaps a sign that the framers intended these measures to affect most applicants, with those passing investigation expected to be the exception. However, the document does have key limitations. It predates the outbreak of war, and thereby the yardstick that the CPGB’s new line provided for judging individuals’ loyalty to Party over country. It is also predates the need for total wartime mobilisation, with the course of the war, particularly from mid-1940, making it difficult to justify broad measures that wasted scarce manpower. Furthermore, this document was of military origin, rather than produced by the Security Service, and therefore does not necessarily offer insight into the thinking of the organisation actually undertaking investigations.

Baxell points to two bodies of evidence to resolve this ambiguity, both of which have their own problems. First, the contemporary outcry against the mistreatment of these individuals, including instances like Aneurin Bevan’s critique of the treatment of former XV International Brigade Chief of Staff Malcolm Dunbar, who was never promoted beyond sergeant.⁶¹ As Baxell acknowledges, however, this was not entirely prejudice – Dunbar himself had refused further promotion.⁶² Other sources suggest that Dunbar’s choice was not uncommon. One discussion in Communist Party offices recorded by the Security Service, for instance, complained about the tendency for capable Party members to avoid promotion, ‘in their heart of hearts [preferring] to remain a gunner or a private on the plea that they are being victimised.’⁶³ Moreover, the Party showed considerable calculation regarding which International Brigade veterans should be made into *causes célèbres*. When Jock Cunningham, the Scottish ex-commander of the British Battalion, was raised as a possible case, it was noted that Cunningham’s history – he mutinied while previously serving in

⁶⁰ Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 421.

⁶¹ Aneurin Bevan, 2 July 1942, House of Commons Debate (Hansard), Vol. 381, Col. 537–8.

⁶² Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 437–8. Baxell was correcting a longstanding tendency to repeat wartime propaganda about Dunbar, e.g. Branson, *History of the Communist Party, 1941–51*, 54.

⁶³ Robson and Phillip, 10 May 1943, TNA, KV 3/387.

Jamaica– was grounds for refusal regardless of Spain.⁶⁴ It is worth noting that International Brigade veterans offered a special resource for the CPGB in this context. While Labour figures such as Bevan were unlikely to campaign against Party officials being victimised, International Brigade veterans evoked considerably more sympathy. As such, it is unsurprising that the rejection of Spanish veterans was publicised ahead of the same treatment received by other high-ranking communists.

Baxell also discusses several veterans who were apparently unable to enlist or were discharged after their Spanish service was discovered.⁶⁵ John Peet, for instance, was interviewed after applying for a short-service commission. He recalled that the interview itself went well, especially as he deliberately left out any mention of Spain.⁶⁶ However,

A week or two later an official letter arrived: we have to inform you that you are unsuitable for a short-service commission. I showed the letter to a senior man in our organisation, the International Brigade Association.

‘So you are another of the rejects,’ he said. ‘It seems that all applications for commissions in the armed forces are being screened by the Special Branch at Scotland Yard, to keep out anybody who has actually been through a modern war.’⁶⁷

Peet’s tale apparently provides direct confirmation that the screening process was being used to actively discriminate against International Brigade volunteers, as well as hinting that his case was one of many. Yet this conclusion is more problematic than it first appears, not least as Peet was soon successful in joining the Palestine Police Force.⁶⁸ More fundamentally, Peet was hardly a typical ex-volunteer. Class and education already precluded most from

⁶⁴ Beauchamp and Robson, Telephone Check, 21 October 1942, TNA, KV 3/387. The same conversation noted that ‘no IBA members have been refused by the Army.’

⁶⁵ Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 418–22.

⁶⁶ The opposite approach might have succeeded. James Klugmann’s candor about politics helped convince superiors that he had nothing to hide. Bailey, ‘Communist in SOE’, 84.

⁶⁷ John Peet, quoted in Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 419.

⁶⁸ Upon learning of his Palestinian appointment, no grounds were found to actually remove him (TNA, KV 2/3933/12a-14a). This points to a key distinction in Security Service methods – the threshold for removing someone from a role was substantially higher than for preventing them obtaining it. E.g. Minutes 1–8, 29 October to 20 December 1942, TNA, KV 3/386. See also Luff, ‘Covert and Overt Operations’, 750.

obtaining sensitive government jobs or wartime commissions. The experience of Peet, and other middle-class volunteers, was therefore inherently dissimilar to the majority of volunteers from working-class backgrounds. Moreover, Peet's continued close association with the IBA was not typical – by this stage, only a third of ex-volunteers were members, let alone active members.⁶⁹ Peet was unusually active after his return from Spain, which points to a wider issue: for committed communists, their domestic political activities may well have ensured their rejection, regardless of their time in Spain. In other words, it is exceedingly difficult to use such accounts to distinguish between attempts to screen active communists and measures specifically against International Brigade veterans.

Baxell faced another constraint in his analysis. Security Service files relating to International Brigade volunteers were disposed of in the 1950s, with only those few judged to be of ongoing relevance – such as Peet's – retained. For the most part, these individuals were far from typical, being judged to be of security concern over the course of decades. Yet new evidence has recently emerged that does deal with the broader experience of many more ex-volunteers. Though their files were destroyed, the card index to these files survived.⁷⁰ Although the detail recorded varies considerably, cards do record summaries of what happened when an individual came under investigation. Out of approximately 400 Scots who returned, 67 ex-volunteers had their files updated during the Second World War, indicating some level of continued surveillance or investigation. This in itself suggests that the Security Service took a less interventionist approach than might be assumed.

Moreover, the detail contained within the summaries tends to confirm that few ex-volunteers faced heavy-handed interference, including those that attempted to enlist. James Gillespie, a Communist Party member from Lumphinnans in Fife, was a relatively typical example. Gillespie had left Fife in 1938, apparently for

⁶⁹ CPGB Central Committee Meeting, 19 March 1939, RGASPI, 495/14/265/49,53.

⁷⁰ The full series is TNA, KV 5/117–31.

London, and had managed to enlist in the Black Watch by 1940. As per regulations, this discovery led to an investigation. Fife Police claimed they had 'learned nothing to the detriment of GILLESPIE from the subversive point of view', a conclusion backed by 'HQ Scottish Command', who noted 'no tendencies of special political opinions.'⁷¹ He was hospitalised for much of 1942-3, with the hospital also recording that 'there was nothing subversive to report.'⁷² On 28 May 1943, his case was cleared for good.

Gillespie's file indicates several things. First, Security Service investigations of armed forces members appear to have been relatively diligent. As well as consulting local police, the Security Service solicited reports from multiple military sources on Gillespie's conduct, a process that lasted more than two years. Clearly, the intent was not to identify and remove Gillespie as quickly as possible on whatever grounds could be found. Second, reports focused on whether Gillespie was undertaking 'subversive' activity in the military rather than his personal politics, confirming that the Security Services had adopted wartime political activity as its key litmus test for intervention. Lastly, and most pertinently for this study, the Security Service was aware from the beginning that Gillespie had spent nearly two years fighting in Spain. This indicates that International Brigade veterans were not considered as a special class of communist – they, like others associated with the Party, were judged on their record since the outbreak of war rather than pre-war affiliations or activity.

Cases with negative outcomes tend to confirm rather than challenge these conclusions. Robert Middleton, the brother of prominent Glaswegian communist George Middleton, did face investigation and eventual imprisonment. His case index makes it clear, however, that his politics were unlikely to have been a factor. He had in fact been expelled from the Communist Party on his return from Spain, where he had been implicated in a 'Trotskyite'

⁷¹ 'GILLESPIE, James', TNA, KV 5/123.

⁷² 'GILLESPIE, James', TNA.

plot against the British Battalion leadership.⁷³ He managed to enlist in the Cameron Highlanders by June 1940, but deserted his unit just months later. He was arrested in Glasgow in October 1941 after for assault, and rearrested for desertion upon release from prison.⁷⁴ In June 1942, he was placed on a restricted person's list and prevented from entering 'Protected Areas.' It seems overwhelmingly likely that this had nothing to do with politics, but rather authorities had come to share the Communist Party view that this was 'a disreputable person morally.'⁷⁵

Although other examples with similar levels of detail are available, they only provide limited snapshots into the thinking of British authorities when it came to dealing with the International Brigade veterans. The case of William Gilmour, whose full file survived, offers more substantive insight. Gilmour was one of the few ex-volunteers who faced restrictions upon his wartime service explicitly due to his politics: his application to join the Buckhaven Home Guard was rejected in 1942.⁷⁶ Although this organisation, at first glance, is not an immediately obvious place to find explicit discrimination, the origins and evolution of the Home Guard made for more stringent political controls.⁷⁷ In practice, as Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird have shown, access to the Home Guard was closely regulated along political lines, including 'several cases involv[ing] men associated with the International Brigades.'⁷⁸ There was nominally a blanket ban on those 'engaged in subversive activities' or with otherwise dubious loyalties, although, as S. P. Mackenzie points out, this

⁷³ These instances are recorded, albeit one-sidedly, in Middleton's International Brigade file (RGASPI, 545/6/173/17-21).

⁷⁴ 'MIDDLETON, George', TNA, KV 5/127.

⁷⁵ 'MIDDLETON, George', TNA.

⁷⁶ 'GILMOUR, William Dieter', KV 5/123.

⁷⁷ This was in no small part due to the crucial role played by several Spanish veterans in setting up and conceptualizing the Home Guard. David Fernbach, 'Tom Wintringham and Socialist Defence Strategy', *History Workshop* 14 (1982), 63-91.

⁷⁸ Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence: Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (Manchester, 2007), 35-7.

judgement was generally left in the hands of local police, who often proved relatively pragmatic.⁷⁹

Despite his rejection, Gilmour's case still reinforces the hypothesis presented here, with his eventual refusal explicitly not based on his time in Spain. His file reveals substantial correspondence between Scottish police forces, reflecting difficulties caused by Gilmour moving frequently in the years prior to 1942, necessitating cooperation across police jurisdictions.⁸⁰ This correspondence reveals that Gilmour's fate was sealed by a report from the City of Glasgow Police, which noted that Gilmour had been dismissed from an engineering job in May 1941 for carrying out 'abnormal communistic activity in his place of employment.'⁸¹ It was this record of wartime political agitation that led to his rejection, not his time in the International Brigades. In fact, Gilmour's service in Spain had been declared as prior military experience on his application to join the Home Guard.⁸² If this sufficed to bar him from enlisting, no further investigation would have been required.

It is certainly possible that Gilmour's time in Spain meant that his application to the Home Guard came to the attention of the Security Service rather than simply being a matter for local police. Records such as these do indicate that surveillance of the International Brigade volunteers was widespread, and their record in Spain may have helped to precipitate investigations. Questions can certainly be raised as to whether such surveillance was an efficient use of resources, particularly after mid-1941 when the Communist Party embraced the war effort. Yet equally, it is impossible to point to any case recorded in the Security Service index where an individual's time in Spain appears linked to an

⁷⁹ S. P. MacKenzie, *The Home Guard: A Political and Military History* (Oxford, 1995), 73–4; Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence*, 35. The contrast is nonetheless striking between the attitudes towards admission to the Home Guard and Regular Army, likely as regimented conditions in the latter was seen as an effective curb on subversion, e.g. Appendix B of Minutes of Conference of RSLOs, 26–7 August 1941.

⁸⁰ 'Wm. Dieter Gilmour – Home Guard', 28 March 1942, TNA, KV 2/3979/5a.

⁸¹ W. Ewing to Chief Constable, Fife Constabulary, 21 April 1942, TNA KV/2/3979/4a.

⁸² 'Form of Enrolment in the Local Defence Volunteers', 8 March 1942, TNA, KV 2/3979/5a.

actual decision to reject them from military service.⁸³ In other words, the British Government's claim that no volunteer had been rejected or discharged purely on the basis of their time in Spain seems to have reflected actual policy.

Bob Cooney's case points to lingering ambiguities, however. By the Security Service's understanding of British communism, Cooney was precisely the sort of individual they feared – a revolutionary leader rather than a follower. Prior to Spain, he had been the Communist Party leader in Aberdeen, developing the Party into a substantial local force and leading successful local resistance to attempts by the BUF to establish a foothold in the region, acquiring a criminal record in the process.⁸⁴ He had considerable Party pedigree, having attended the International Lenin School in Moscow and had recently returned from a successful tenure as a senior Political Commissar in Spain.⁸⁵ Neither the Party nor Cooney would have been surprised by an official refusal. Cooney claimed to have been informed by a contact that he had been barred from enlisting in the military or joining the Civil Service during the early months of the war, although he never tested this before being called up in December 1940.⁸⁶ His ongoing activity in the Communist Party while in the army was anything but subtle: he was mooted as a parliamentary candidate in Greenock in 1941, and actually stood for Glasgow Central in 1945.⁸⁷

Cooney's file was destroyed in the 1950s, and his case summary gives no indication that the Security Service ever actively investigated him, although he was certainly under surveillance.⁸⁸ His case is nonetheless suggestive, partly because it indicates that there were substantial inconsistencies in the treatment

⁸³ This provides context to a controversial exchange in Parliament. The claim that 'no soldier has been discharged from the Army under [paragraph 390, XVIII (a), King's Regulations, 1940] because he was formerly a member of the International Brigade' was likely true, if only because – as acknowledged in the exchange – those discharged were targeted, at least officially, for other reasons. Tom Driberg and Arthur Henderson, 29 June 1943, House of Commons Debate (Hansard), Vol. 390, Col. 1443.

⁸⁴ Bob Cooney, *Proud Journey* (London, 2015), 8–27.

⁸⁵ 'Biografia de Militantes', RGASPI, 545/6/118/30-1.

⁸⁶ Recording of talk by Bob Cooney, TLS, MS, Tape 228/A.

⁸⁷ Cooney, Tape 228/A.

⁸⁸ 'COONEY, Robert Hunt', TNA, KV 5/119.

of International Brigade veterans, but also because it shows the limits of the Security Service's own files in illuminating the restrictions placed on ex-volunteers. Cooney's involvement in the war effort was carefully managed: he was assigned as a Gunner in a Royal Artillery Searchlight Battery, and was kept in Britain on several occasions when his unit was posted overseas. His posting was likely deliberate, using second-line units as a dumping ground for awkward characters was apparently common enough that Party activists noticed the pattern.⁸⁹ Yet equally, the boundaries to Cooney's participation were not absolute, nor were they absolute for most International Brigade veterans. As the next section shows, Cooney himself was able to exercise considerable agency within his unit, subverting attempted surveillance and eventually managing to obtain an overseas posting. Moreover, so 'dangerous' an individual as Cooney being admitted into the armed forces – before the invasion of the Soviet Union – points to a high threshold for outright rejection.

This all points to a need to understand the boundaries of International Brigade veterans' participation in the war effort as being considerably more complex than wholesale exclusion. Outright rejection was used only as a last resort, with the Security Service proving reluctant to intervene in such a manner without specific cause. Crucially, pre-war activities, such as joining the International Brigades, were not considered sufficient grounds for action. This finding challenges the established narrative of the ex-volunteers being punished specifically for choosing to fight against fascism 'before the referee had blown the whistle', in Cooney's words.⁹⁰ Rather, it is impossible to distinguish repressive measures against the ex-volunteers from those designed to counter and limit communist subversion more broadly. Moreover, such measures would have existed even had the Spanish Civil War never taken place, likely affecting much the same individuals. Yet it is equally clear that, despite the absence of measures designed to restrict their participation in a wholesale manner, the

⁸⁹ Mary Bartlett noted that the armed forces were 'isolating [communists] when they found them. They put them in some out of the way place with searchlight batteries or they stick them in the cookhouse.' E. Michael Report, 22 May 1942, TNA, KV 3/387.

⁹⁰ Cooney, Tape 228/A.

state did not adopt a laissez-faire attitude to the veterans, who still often faced a series of official and unofficial barriers. By dealing with ex-volunteers on an individual basis, British authorities created a system that could lead to highly variable, sometimes arbitrary, outcomes.

Policing and Contesting Boundaries

The general intent of government policy appears to have been to permit the greatest possible 'safe' participation for any given individual, a judgement that rested upon their perceived wartime loyalties as well as capacity for causing disruption. As seen with Cooney, this might take the form of assignment to a second-line unit, or moving them to 'small factories', although it was considered unwise to move communists from 'old-established factories' unless strictly necessary, citing concerns that existing anti-subversion measures may be disrupted and resources wasted in tracing them.⁹¹ Such cases point to a concerted effort to manage human resources quite precisely, if not always effectively. Naturally, variation is to be expected in terms of how accurately officials were able to make such judgements.⁹² Moreover, the Security Service evidently enjoyed limited powers of intervention – as shown by Roderick Bailey, who details how other departments, including intelligence agencies, could simply ignore security advice.⁹³ It is important to appreciate that the Security Service was far from omnipotent, operating within a series of bureaucratic and practical constraints and that these limits could affect how ex-International Brigaders were treated. The Communist Party itself certainly saw it in such terms.

This Security thing is incomprehensible, there's no logic to it. They've got their people that are certainly good soldiers and never will be anything

⁹¹ Home Defence Committee Minutes, 25 August 1941; 'Wartime Control of Communism – General', 9 June 1941, TNA, KV 4/265/32b.

⁹² Cold War revelations about communist penetration provide ample evidence of this, see Anthony Glees, *The Secrets of the Service: British intelligence and Communist subversion, 1939–51* (London, 1987).

⁹³ Bailey, 'Communist in SOE', 82–8.

else, and they've got people in the bloody Army that are pests in my opinion... My view is that behind the scenes there's a tug-of-war goes on. The Security fights over some things and is blind about others. They're very inefficient of course. The system is efficient but the men handling it are inefficient.⁹⁴

The limitations of the Security Service in intervening in other branches of government and the armed forces points to another issue – the extent that regulations were actually followed in practice. Unofficial methods of managing the ex-volunteers could exceed the measures envisaged by authorities. As reported by some veterans, they could face differential treatment once in the military, ranging from bullying to denial of promotion or overseas postings. Oral history is a particularly useful resource for examining this question, as these projects have preserved a considerably wider spectrum of voices than other archival or published accounts. However, it is important to avoid extrapolating too far from these sources. Such evidence is both anecdotal and, given that it was collected decades after the fact in most cases, often inextricably bound up in post-war narratives, with some ex-volunteers openly relishing the perceived incompetence of the British state. Nonetheless, these accounts indicate that management and surveillance of the ex-volunteers in the military was in practice usually delegated to their unit's commanding officer, and these officers' attitudes towards 'Reds' serving under them could be crucial.

A key constraint faced by the Security Service in monitoring International Brigade volunteers was geographical. The Security Service's own personnel were overwhelmingly based in London, yet even in London they relied upon the Metropolitan Police for everyday work such as surveillance.⁹⁵ This meant that the capabilities of local police were vital in enabling any large-scale surveillance of the ex-volunteers, particularly the large majority who lived outside of London. This reliance is reflected in the records of the Security Service itself – in William Gilmour's case, for instance, their substantive input was apparently

⁹⁴ Robson and Phillip, 10 May 1943, TNA.

⁹⁵ Monitoring political meetings, for instance, was usually undertaken by Special Branch. E.g. Report on IBA Meeting, 24 January 1942, TNA, KV 5/46. Such cooperation was nominally nationwide, 'Regional Organisation of Police and MI5', TNA, CAB 93/5.

minimal, with the file doing little more than collating police reports from across Scotland.

Location	Number of returned volunteers	Number (proportion) under surveillance
Aberdeen	18	3 (16.7%)
Dundee	42	9 (21.4%)
Edinburgh	41	8 (19.5%)
Glasgow	150	32 (21.3%)
Dunbartonshire	19	2 (10.5%)
Fife	32	8 (25%)
Lanarkshire	35	3 (8.6%)
Renfrewshire	23	1 (4.3%)
Other	30	1 (3.3%)
Total	390	67 (17.2%)

Table 6.1: Surveillance of Scottish ex-volunteers during Second World War.⁹⁶

Table 6.1 shows how geography might affect surveillance. Those from cities reappeared on the Security Service's radar more often, likely as urban police forces had sufficient resources to undertake this work effectively. Moreover, police in areas such as Fife or Glasgow had substantial experience in dealing with revolutionary politics, and already had considerable resources dedicated to monitoring left-wing activism. Moreover, they were likely more familiar with the process of liaising with the Security Service, and had a better idea of what was of interest to the intelligence community. Unsurprisingly, Glasgow and Fife police appear as particularly regular, proactive and diligent correspondents in the Security Service records.⁹⁷ This points to ex-volunteers' place of residence providing at least a partial explanation for variable treatment at the hands of the authorities, with those from cities or locales with a history of political agitation much more likely to face effective surveillance.

⁹⁶ Figures on returned volunteers are from Appendix A.

⁹⁷ Although there are references throughout the file index, their collaboration in William Gilmour's case is the best-preserved instance (TNA, KV 2/3979/4a-5a).

Location	Files with few/ sparse updates	Files with multiple, detailed updates	Files containing investigations
Aberdeen	1	1	1
Dundee	6	1	1
Edinburgh	2	6	0
Glasgow	15	12	6
Dunbartonshire	1	1	1
Fife	3	1	4
Lanarkshire	1	1	0
Renfrewshire	1	0	0
Other	0	1	0
Total	30	24	13

Table 6.2: Intensity of surveillance of Scottish ex-volunteers.⁹⁸

Geographic disparities grow more apparent when considering the substance of reports. For nearly half of ex-volunteers with active files, their cards indicate only sporadic or ineffectual surveillance, let alone active intervention.

Moreover, detailed updates were even more concentrated in the districts identified above as having larger or especially experienced police forces, with Glasgow and Fife again proving the most proactive in updating the Security Service and providing them with fuller information. Edinburgh police, while referring lower numbers to the Security Service, were also relatively diligent in providing substantive information.

These observations are open to multiple interpretations. Security Service policy might have been implemented incredibly effectively, with ex-volunteers being efficiently triaged between threatening and non-threatening categories, with few resources wasted keeping an eye on the latter, leading to many inactive files. Yet it might also indicate a breakdown in the system envisaged by policymakers, with the bulk of veterans escaping surveillance altogether, and never actually being evaluated as a threat. The paucity of sources relating to investigations of serving armed forces members suggests either that few ex-volunteers were discovered during their service, or that the military often

⁹⁸ Figures from TNA, KV 5/117-31.

ignored the policy of referring such individuals to the Security Service, opting instead to deal with them on their own terms. In fact, the concentration of investigations dealing with Glaswegians and Fifers suggests that these individuals were being discovered on the civilian side, through the police rather than military.⁹⁹ In other words, the envisaged close liaison between armed forces and Security Service may never have functioned as intended.

This possibility is also suggested by the ex-volunteers' testimony. Frank McCusker, for instance, recounted joining up after the outbreak of war, but being discharged within days of admitting to a doctor that an old wound was from Spain – if his timeline was correct, it is implausible that any sort of investigation was carried out as per regulations.¹⁰⁰ James Maley recalled being rejected out of hand by a recruiting officer when he volunteered in July 1940.¹⁰¹ He was eventually accepted after getting involved in a labour dispute at Parkhead Forge in May 1941 – likely in the expectation that he would do less damage in uniform.¹⁰² It is noteworthy that he apparently came to Security Service attention as a result of this strike, with no addition to his file being recorded in 1940 when he attempted to enlist.¹⁰³ Examples such as these suggest that the military sometimes acted unilaterally – against regulations – in rejecting ex-volunteers.¹⁰⁴ It is unclear what extent this reflected their time in Spain as opposed to their status as communists, although it is certainly possible that the two were sometimes conflated.

It is important to note, however, that those facing outright rejection were not the norm, nor was gaining admission the only hurdle. Some Scottish volunteers

⁹⁹ The index cards provide inconsistent detail, but in some cases it was clearly the police who provided the initial tip, e.g. '[Chief Constable] Glasgow' in 'MACFARQUHAR, Roderick' and 'McFARLANE, James Lindsay', TNA, KV 5/127.

¹⁰⁰ McCusker in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 45.

¹⁰¹ James Maley, IWMSA, Tape 11947/2.

¹⁰² This expectation was perhaps misplaced, as Maley ostentatiously agitated against imperialism during his posting to India. Maley, Tape 11947/2.

¹⁰³ 'MALEY, James', TNA, KV 5/127.

¹⁰⁴ Baxell perceptively notes that individual recruiters may have simply been unwilling to engage in a tedious bureaucratic process – although this could cut both ways, with some ex-volunteers not undergoing any checks. Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 490n.

managed to navigate entry to the armed forces, but reported being treated with suspicion, especially by senior officers. Sydney Quinn was aware of special treatment, believing – likely correctly – that the army kept a ‘dossier’ on him and that his superiors kept him away from sensitive documents.¹⁰⁵ Others, such as Roderick MacFarquhar, recalled that the army was ‘very, very strongly biased against people like myself who had been in the Spanish Civil War’, although he does not specify what this entailed, and he still managed to reach the rank of captain.¹⁰⁶ Alec Marcovitch recalled being ‘suspected wherever I went’ and was barred from serving overseas.¹⁰⁷ However, others reported little discrimination against them, such as Michael Clarke, who stayed in the army until 1954, or Eddie Brown, who noted that the army knew he was in Spain, but he was not ‘victimised or discriminated against.’¹⁰⁸

One clue to this variability lies in the experiences of a particular group of volunteers who elicited a very specific reaction in the armed forces. For a certain type of British officer, the instruction to keep a soldier under surveillance was evidently distasteful, if not dishonourable, and they preferred instead to speak candidly with their subordinate. Marcovitch, for instance, recalled being summoned to the company office during his training, and being told that he should avoid making trouble in this posting, implying that they would leave him alone if he kept his head down.¹⁰⁹ In some cases, officers candidly revealed the existence of surveillance measures, and strongly indicated their disapproval of them.¹¹⁰ For such officers, soldiers’ behaviour under their

¹⁰⁵ Sydney Quinn, TLS, MS, Tape 202.

¹⁰⁶ MacFarquhar in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 87.

¹⁰⁷ Alec Marcovitch, TLS, MS, Tape 182.

¹⁰⁸ Clarke in MacDougall, *Voices from the Hunger Marches*, 169; Brown in MacDougall, *Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, 115.

¹⁰⁹ Marcovitch, Tape 182.

¹¹⁰ One instance was related to the CPGB in 1942 by Bill Brooks, who emphasised the distaste of the officer forced to search his belongings. London-based Scot Danny Gibbons opined that ‘Battalion officers were beginning to get a little bit irritated’ with political questions, being more concerned with performance – ‘are you a bloody good soldier or are you not?’ E. Michaels Report, 9 June 1942, TNA, KV 3/387. This, according to the Security Service’s own internal history, was quite common, noting that after June 1941 their warnings to the armed forces about individual communists ‘had no immediate bearing’ on discipline, and the ‘natural reaction of a

command was their main concern – they were apparently willing to tolerate diverse political views so long as they did not affect job performance.

Bob Cooney's case shows how these attitudes could undermine efforts to manage and monitor ex-volunteers. Soon after joining his unit, Cooney was summoned by the commanding officer and warned about his future conduct in the ranks, although in a relatively conciliatory fashion.¹¹¹ While Cooney's own account, recorded in front of an audience, is somewhat self-serving, it seems clear from the officer's own reports that he did not have a particularly firm grasp of either the troops under his command, or left-wing politics in general.

All ranks seem very elated with the show being put up by Russia, it has even made some of the Gunners slightly 'Cocky', as it is feared that there [sic] political opinions are slightly tinged with Red.¹¹²

By class, training and vocation, it is likely that many officers had a similar appreciation of communists under their command, particularly in the kind of second-line units to which troublesome individuals such as Cooney were sent. Cooney was able to win over his comrades over time, receiving a telegram of support from the sergeant and men of his unit when his candidacy for parliament was announced. Moreover, his willingness to stand up for himself and escalate his concerns eventually led to an overseas combat posting.¹¹³ It also helped subvert attempts to keep him under surveillance.

After discovering that I was not a monster, but quite an interesting lad, the orderly room sergeant confided to me one night in the pub, that every month a circular and questionnaire from field security personnel was arriving without fail, and had such stupid questions as the following: What it is his character, a) as a man and B) as a soldier. Is he a barrack room lawyer? Is there any evidence he is indulging in subversive propaganda? Is there any evidence he is distributing subversive literature a) Communist b) Fascist c) IRA.¹¹⁴

CO...was that he was concerned with the present rather than the future.' John Curry, *The Security Service 1908-1945* (Kew, 1999), 351.

¹¹¹ Cooney, Tape 228/A.

¹¹² H. C. Wenger, 541 S/L Battery War Diary, July 1941, TNA, WO 166/3372.

¹¹³ Cooney, Tape 228/A.

¹¹⁴ Cooney, Tape 228/A.

If Cooney's recollections were accurate, the use of a generic, centralised report format suggests that such surveillance was relatively common. It also confirms that these procedures were not always taken especially seriously – certainly not with much regard for internal security. Talented individuals such as Cooney were also clearly capable of subverting the system. Moreover, it is worth noting that unlike the Security Service, the British armed forces had far less institutional knowledge of British communism.¹¹⁵ If they were taking active measures to dismiss or manage the volunteers, without liaising with the Security Service, it becomes understandable why the treatment veterans received was so variable.

Conclusions

The assumption that the British state imposed substantive blanket restrictions on the wartime activities of the ex-International Brigade volunteers gives the state both too much and too little credit. Too much, as it supposes that the state had the wherewithal to effectively watch and control almost two thousand individuals at a time when its resources were being stretched to the limit, such as when public paranoia regarding potential 'fifth columnists' exploded following the Fall of France.¹¹⁶ As shown by the geographic variability in the effectiveness of surveillance, it is clear that the actual power and reach of the Security Service itself can be easily overestimated. State surveillance and intervention occurred on a scale much smaller than previously imagined, with only a minority of the veterans ever actually watched, let alone targeted. Too little credit, however, is given for their relatively pragmatic approach. From the perspective of the Security Service at least, the spirit of policy designed to regulate participation in the war effort was generally adhered to. By continuing

¹¹⁵ The military's enduring belief in the threat posed by communism, despite assurances from the Security Service, was the source of some bemusement to the latter, such as a May 1941 letter proposing means by which they might 'fill the breasts of the Military with confidence.' Dixon to Hollis, 31 May 1941, TNA, KV 4/265.

¹¹⁶ Richard Thurlow, 'The Evolution of the Mythical British Fifth Column, 1939–46', *Twentieth Century British History* 10:4 (1999), 477–98.

to treat communists and International Brigade veterans as individuals rather than categories, the Security Service avoided making wasteful mistakes. While the continued necessity of this policy can certainly be questioned, particularly after June 1941, this remains a value judgement as to the nature of British communism itself.

What is certain is the differences this case demonstrates between British official anti-communism and the virulent post-war McCarthyist strain.¹¹⁷ While communist affiliations often sufficed to engender official suspicion, communists were not persecuted as an enemy category in wartime Britain. The Security Service had extensive lists of both communists and International Brigade veterans, yet these never appear to have been the sole basis for decision-making. The insistence on due process for individuals, and an unwillingness to take direct action without a high threshold of evidence against those known to be in suspect categories needs to be seen in part as an outcome of these war years, particularly in light of Jennifer Luff's research on the scale of anti-communist interventions in interwar Britain.¹¹⁸

The 'premature anti-fascist' narrative also overlooks the reality of the compromises necessary for the creation of a mass, civilian army in a democratic society. Although revolutionary beliefs may have been anathema to the culture of the peacetime British armed forces, rapid expansion during wartime meant that change was both necessary and inevitable. As such, it is useful to place the watershed of greater tolerance of International Brigade veterans not in June 1941, as is often assumed, but May-June 1940, with mid-1941 onwards seeing only incremental liberalisations of a policy that already encouraged the

¹¹⁷ This distinction is missing in Helen Graham's assessment of the reaction of 'political establishments' to the returned volunteers. Graham, *The War and its Shadow*, 92-3.

¹¹⁸ Luff, 'Covert and Overt Operations', esp. 747-51. On contrasting responses to McCarthyism in Britain and the United States, see Giora Goodman, 'The British Government and the Challenge of McCarthyism in the Early Cold War', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12:1 (2010), 62-97; Karen Potter, 'British McCarthyism', in Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones and Andrew Lownie (eds.), *North American Spies: New Revisionist Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 143-157; Peter Hennessey and Gail Brownfeld, 'Britain's Cold War Security Purge: The Origins of Positive Vetting', *The Historical Journal* 25:4 (1982), 965-74.

integration of subversive elements into the armed forces. The remainder of 1940 saw individuals such as Bob Cooney called up, a sign that it was no longer acceptable to waste scarce manpower. This coincided with important shifts in the Communist Party's own line on the conflict, yet rather than an official response to the Party line, both Party and government policy should be seen as stemming from the shock of France's defeat and Britain's newly precarious position. Those with uncomfortable political beliefs would now have to be tolerated in the armed forces, so long as they kept their behaviour within certain boundaries.

This should not, of course, be taken as a sign that the British state now trusted and welcomed communists, but rather that wholesale exclusion was no longer practicable given the scale of mobilisation now necessary. Some boundaries – notably in the Home Guard – would remain in place until the last years of the war.¹¹⁹ Moreover, this was not a frictionless process, especially in the armed forces, where limited institutional understanding and tolerance of communists was a much greater barrier than official Security Service efforts. Undoubtedly, the latitude given to mid-ranking officers in dealing with the surveillance and management of individual ex-volunteers led to unpredictable outcomes. The apparent unwillingness of military services to liaise with the Security Service added to the variability, putting volunteers at the mercy of commanding officers' prejudices. For some officers, little excuse was needed to throw the book at International Brigade veterans. For others, the surveillance itself was compromised by their laxity or distaste for underhandedness. Many, perhaps most, cared only that individuals did their job and kept quiet about politics. In turn, many International Brigade veterans were quite willing to do just that – a small price to pay for the chance to avenge their loss in Spain

¹¹⁹ Notably, shifts towards tolerating communists in the Home Guard in early 1943 was framed in terms of bringing policy into line with practice in the regular forces. Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence*, 37.

Epilogue

On leaving Spain, the International Brigade volunteers swore to continue their struggle in support of the Republic. It soon became apparent that this would mean the overthrow of a victorious Franco regime, whether through internal revolt, or external intervention. There is little doubt that almost all returned volunteers maintained their antipathy to Franco, with only a small handful – such as Hamish Fraser – going so far as to renounce this core belief during their lives. Yet beyond this common ground, forging a collective purpose for the International Brigade veterans proved difficult.¹ Only a minority proved immediately willing to remain active in political work, although successful Aid Spain campaigns such as the ‘International Brigade Convoy’ showcased how they could speak with authority and impact on Spanish issues.² The founding of the International Brigade Association (IBA) in early 1939 represented the desire to institutionalise and defend this political capital, forming a vehicle through which future campaigns could be coordinated and the volunteers’ legacy defended. Unsurprisingly, the new organisation retained close ties to the CPGB, although as Tom Buchanan notes, the relationship was at times ‘surprisingly complex.’³ An early attempt to mobilise the political potential of the IBA – in support of the Soviet Union’s invasion of Finland – backfired spectacularly in the face of widespread public sympathy for Finnish resistance.⁴ The Party had hoped to create a new revolutionary elite, able to speak to wider

¹ For an overview of the IBA during and after the Second World War, with frequent reference to Scotland, see Tom Buchanan, ‘Holding the line: the political strategy of the International Brigade Association, 1939–1977’, *Labour History Review* 66:3 (2001), 294–312.

² See MML, Box 40, File A/1–4.

³ Buchanan, ‘Holding the line’, 294.

⁴ Tom Buchanan, *The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain* (Brighton, 2007), 179–81.

political issues with an independent, respected voice. Finland demonstrated the impossibility of this vision – they could either be dismissed as a mere mouthpiece for the Party line, or remain a single-issue advocacy group.

The Second World War had come at an awkward time from the perspective of the IBA for other reasons. While time may have brought more volunteers back into the fold, and allowed for enduring organisational structures to be firmly established, war brought upheaval. The IBA lost contact with many former volunteers now serving in the armed forces, and many of its most active and fittest members were therefore unable to help establish the Association. However, Scotland, with its particularly high concentration of volunteers, was better placed than most districts to establish a somewhat functional branch system during and after the Second World War. The Glasgow IBA branch managed to hold commemorations, reunions and fundraising events on a semi-regular basis for over a decade after the volunteers' return, while most other districts outwith London fell into inactivity.⁵ In 1944, Gary McCartney reported that 'the IBA in Glasgow, despite its many weaknesses, had become a real live body, recognised and respected amongst wide circles in the city and with a corporate existence of its own.'⁶ By 1946, the Glasgow IBA was in touch with more veterans than any other city or district, including London, with 150 members.⁷ Glasgow's continued efforts put it at 'the top of the class', according to IBA secretary Nan Green – of particular significance as the national organisation was nearly insolvent by 1949, and the occasional cheque from Glasgow was immensely welcome.⁸

Not all news from Scotland was quite so welcome. Although the IBA had retreated from politics beyond the Spanish question, this concealed rather than resolved the underlying tension between their links to the Communist Party and their purpose as an overarching group for all Spanish veterans. With the

⁵ Buchanan credits George Murray with providing this impetus. Buchanan, 'Holding the line', 297.

⁶ IBA Bulletin, 1944, NLS, TMP, Box 4, File 1.

⁷ IBA Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 14 June 1946, NLS, TMP, Box 4, File 1.

⁸ Green to Murray, 29 March and 9 May 1949, MML, Box 40, File B/85,88.

changed political climate of the Cold War, divisions could swiftly resurface. The rupture between Tito and Stalin in 1948 proved to be the catalyst for one such instance. After Yugoslavian International Brigade veterans reached out to the IBA, the Scottish district protested the decision to denounce the Yugoslavs. Nan Green sent a blistering reply north.

What is Titoism in essence and what is the essential content of the letter which was addressed to us? Its purpose is:

- a) To split the working class progressive movement
- b) To blacken and destroy confidence in the Soviet Union.

In other words, exactly the same purpose as the Trotskyites ever since the 1930s, and if you have any doubts on the matter or can't see what it has to do with us, we ask you to cast your minds back to the POUM in Spain, whose role was exactly the same.⁹

Green's efforts to invoke the same tropes of Stalinist discourse that had worked so well in defending orthodoxy in Spain were less effective in 1949. The secretary and treasurer of the Scottish IBA both resigned, and were replaced by Andy Shaw and Phil Gillan. These two, Nan Green was pointedly reassured, were 'not likely to indulge in heretical or heterodox viewpoints.'¹⁰ Yet although the Party was able to maintain its dominance over the inner life of the IBA, such conflicts served as reminders that the organisation's unity rested solely on Spain. Future events, such as Krushchev's 1956 denunciation of Stalin and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, would further splinter the political views of the International Brigade veterans. Political diversity, which had been largely illusory during their actual service, was now very real.

Even then, it is difficult to judge the IBA's effectiveness in its advocacy. Sporadic events and conferences were held, solidarity campaigns launched and publications issued, which undoubtedly helped keep Spanish issues alive, at least among the left. As implicitly allowed by Baxell, however, these efforts seem to have achieved little beyond raising public awareness during the Cold War –

⁹ Green to Murray, 14 December 1949, MML, Box 40, File B/100.

¹⁰ Murray to Green, 30 April 1950, MML, Box 40, File B/106.

attempts to protest the treatment of leading PCE figure Julián Grimau, for instance, could not prevent his execution in 1963.¹¹ As Buchanan notes, the IBA was poorly suited to campaign along purely humanitarian grounds, yet few other avenues appeared to remain.¹² From a Scottish perspective, a greater threat to the regime came from Glasgow anarchist Stuart Christie, whose attempt to blow Franco up with plastic explosives was foiled in Madrid in 1964, long after the Spanish Communist Party had abandoned such direct efforts to remove Franco.¹³

Yet as their capacity for influencing events in Spain declined, the IBA grew more effective in pursuing their other mandate: commemoration. As their ties to the Communist Party grew less overt, the way opened for a wider range of organisations to embrace the volunteers' memory. In Scotland, the 1970s marked a change in fortunes, with wider public acknowledgement in the media and celebration in the labour movement. The ex-volunteers were guests of honour at the 1972 Scottish Miners Gala, and they marched with the miners at demonstrations in 1976.¹⁴ Such publicity fed into calls for more permanent forms of commemoration, with memorials mooted in Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh.¹⁵ Notably, these efforts saw the active support of local Labour Party representatives, although in Edinburgh at least local conservatives opposed the memorial unless it commemorated both sides of the conflict, a compromise likened by one journalist to 'asking the Luftwaffe to do a fly-past at Churchill's funeral.'¹⁶ While the International Brigades remained politically divisive, these divisions no longer resembled those between communist and anti-communist. The International Brigades were being embraced by the broader British left, as

¹¹ Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, 451–2.

¹² Buchanan, 'Holding the line', 305–6.

¹³ Stuart Christie, *Granny Made Me an Anarchist: General Franco, the Angry Brigade and Me* (Edinburgh, 2007).

¹⁴ Scottish Miners Gala pamphlet, 1972, MML, Box 21, File F/12; Clipping from Morning Star, 1976, MML, Box 21, File F/14a.

¹⁵ On the conception, funding and unveiling of these memorials, see MML, Box 21, File F/5–15.

¹⁶ *The Weekend Scotsman*, 16 July 1983, clipping in NLS, John Dunlop Papers, File 5.

they had hoped for – but never quite succeeded – during the Spanish Civil War itself.

Franco's death in 1975 made it possible for the ex-volunteers to consider returning to Spain. By this stage, they were already an aging group, and growing steadily fewer in number. By the mid-1970s, the IBA was in contact with just 50 Scottish veterans.¹⁷ When the first group departed Britain to visit old battlefields in 1976, the youngest was already 63.¹⁸ The declining health and capacity of its members coincided with an upswing in the responsibilities and demands on the IBA itself, which especially by the 1980s was involved in significant fundraising efforts, particularly for the new London memorial in Jubilee Gardens, and organising widespread 50th Anniversary commemorations. Yet the Association was unable even to hold an Annual General Meeting by this point, and kept going chiefly through the efforts of Bill Alexander.¹⁹ Alexander's decisions were sometimes controversial, such as not arranging for British veterans to attend anniversary commemorations in Madrid in 1986, opting instead to send a three-person delegation.²⁰ The Association was also ill-equipped to manage its increasingly complicated finances transparently, particularly as internal democratic reporting processes had been effectively suspended. Money available to support commemorative activities in Britain was not distributed evenly or at all, while the organisation's new treasurer raised private questions about the allocation of funds, pointing out that expenditure had often not been properly accounted for, and projects such as cataloguing the IBA's archive had proven poor value for money.²¹ While there is no suggestion that money had been used improperly, it seems clear that the IBA was ill

¹⁷ List of names and addresses, MML, Box 40, File B/141.

¹⁸ 'Civil War Veterans head for Spanish battlefields', *Morning Star*, April 1976, clipping in MML, Box D-3, File C/21a.

¹⁹ In 1987, the previous, poorly-attended GM had been in 1965. Alexander to Edney, 29 January 1987, MML, [Uncatalogued Box: 'IBA Financial Correspondence 1987 + undated'].

²⁰ Alexander to Edney, 30 October 1986; Jump to Edney, 18 March 1987, MML, [Uncatalogued Box: 'IBA Financial Correspondence 1987 + undated'].

²¹ Patience Edney was critical of the catalogue, noting the 'lack of cross referencing' or 'alphabetic references'. Edney to Crome and Walker, January 1987, MML, [Uncatalogued Box: 'IBA Financial Correspondence 1987 + undated'].

prepared for the 'remarkable' interest in the conflict that emerged during the 1980s, and the demands this entailed. Through Bill Alexander's stubborn efforts, the IBA battled on but resisted internal change, especially the original provision that only veterans could be full members. Only with Alexander's passing did change occur, with the IBA finally merging with the newer supporters' organisation, the Friends of the International Brigades, to form the International Brigade Memorial Trust (IBMT).

By 1996, there were few Scottish volunteers remaining to take part in anniversary celebrations in Spain, although two still managed to make the journey as part of a commemorative tour across three cities.²² A more favourable political climate meant that greater resources were available to support them – veterans had their accommodation, meals and transport paid for, with further financial aid available for the especially needy. The Spanish Government also agreed at last to honour a promise made to the volunteers on their departure from Spain: that they would be eligible for Spanish citizenship after the war had been won. Seven Scots completed initial paperwork accepting this offer, but were never able to claim it, as none proved willing to comply with Spanish law requiring that they renounce their British citizenship.²³ It was not until 2008 that this requirement was removed, by which stage only one Scot – Thomas Watters – remained to accept this offer. Watters had actually served as a driver with the Scottish Ambulance Unit, not the International Brigades.²⁴ No Scottish International Brigader was ever formally recognised as a Spanish citizen.

However, even as the Scottish International Brigade veterans dwindled, efforts to remember and celebrate their actions have continued apace. Despite Tory reservations, the memorials were built, and have never stopped being built. The

²² These were Steven Fullarton and Christopher Smith, Archivo Historico Provincial Albacete, International Brigade Collection (AHPA), Box 63190, File 6/110,134.

²³ These forms are held in the AHPA, Box 63186.

²⁴ '70 years on, Spain says thank you to British and Irish civil war veterans', *The Guardian* [online], 8 June 2009, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/08/spanish-civil-war-british-irish-veterans>> , last accessed 24 January 2018.

most recent, to John Smith, the sole volunteer from Irvine in Ayrshire, was dedicated just weeks prior to the time of writing.²⁵ With memorials came art inspired by the volunteers, with a rich tradition of music, theatre and poetry commemorating or taking inspiration from the volunteers.²⁶ As with memorial building, this process has shown no sign of slowing, with performances of *549: Scots of the Spanish Civil War* recently taking place – to critical acclaim – in Glasgow and Prestonpans.²⁷ Through the all-important modern metric of social media engagement, the Spanish Civil War remains alive – the ‘Scotland and the Spanish Civil War’ Facebook group has over 1,100 members, and inaccurate tweets about the volunteers from the Radical Glasgow account often garner hundreds of engagements.²⁸ Regular commemorations continue to take place at memorials across Scotland, and pilgrimages to Spanish battlefields – usually to Jarama for the anniversary of the battle in mid-February – are still organised each year.²⁹ Those involved with commemoration efforts have produced several publications dealing with the Scottish volunteers, most notably Daniel Gray’s popular history but also several local studies.³⁰

Given the variety of efforts to remember the International Brigades in Scotland, the dearth of scholarly history writing on the subject appears all the more curious. In England, Wales and Ireland, the same passion translated into history books, which in turn inspired more books seeking to refute these celebrations. It is possible that the lack of ‘intellectuals’ among the Scottish contingent, noted at times throughout this study, meant that none of the veterans felt themselves

²⁵ ‘Memorial unveiled for Irvine man who fought and died in the Spanish Civil War’, *Irvine Times* [online], 3 January 2018, <http://www.irvinetimes.com/news/irvine/15804187.Memorial_unveiled_for_Irvin_man_who_fought_and_died_in_Spanish_Civil_War>, last accessed 24 January 2018.

²⁶ E.g. Robert Munro, *The Cry of Spain* (Unpublished script, 1986), MML, Box A-14, File E/1; Hector Macmillan, *A Greater Tomorrow* (Programme, 1997), MML, Box 21, File F/20; *No Pasaran!: Scots in the Spanish Civil War*, Album produced by Greentrax (2012).

²⁷ ‘549: Scots of the Spanish Civil War’, Wonderfools [online], <<http://www.wonderfools.org/549/>>, last accessed 24 January 2018.

²⁸ E.g. Radical Glasgow, 8 January 2018, Twitter [online], <https://twitter.com/Radical_Glasgow/status/950435337712652288>, last accessed 24 January 2018.

²⁹ E.g. ‘Marking the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Jarama’, *IBMT Magazine* 45:2 (2017), 4.

³⁰ E.g. Mike Arnott, *Dundee and the Spanish Civil War* (Dundee, 2008); Mark Gillespie, *When the Gorbals Fought Franco* (Glasgow, 2014).

in a position to write such a history, just as few of them considered committing their own personal experiences to paper. It is telling that perhaps the most significant publication from a Scottish academic came in the form of theatre, with Professor Willy Maley of Glasgow University writing a popular play based loosely on the experiences of his father, Jimmy Maley, in Spain.³¹ In many ways, this case represents a striking example of working-class agency in preserving history, made possible by the dedication of the friends and families of the volunteers, the work of organisations like the IBA and IBMT and perhaps above all the continued resonance of their story. For those on the political left, the International Brigades offer an exceptionally useful example of how determined individuals can stand up and be counted against seemingly monolithic enemies. If five hundred Scots could make a stand against the spread of fascism in one of the darkest periods of European history, then the hopes of new generations of activists remain plausible.

The different memory landscape in Scotland compared to elsewhere in Britain throws the purpose of this study into stark relief, particularly in how it relates to 'revisionist' histories of the International Brigades. Is this a revisionist account, if there is no established scholarly view to challenge? While there are certainly some misconceptions about Scotland's involvement in the Spanish Civil War in public discourse, correcting them has been incidental rather than a fundamental aim of this account. Nor do I harbour any illusions that these corrections will have the power to fundamentally alter the tone of public discussion of the International Brigades in Scotland. Those who seek to celebrate the International Brigades will continue to celebrate them, irrespective of what is written here or elsewhere. If scholarly research is to affect public understandings, it must seek to explain rather than correct. In seeking to offer grounded explanations – such as why Scots volunteered in greater numbers than other Britons – it is hoped that this account will be of use

³¹ John Maley and Willy Maley, *From the Calton to Catalonia* (Glasgow, 1992).

not just to scholars, but also to anyone with a broader interest in the Scottish International Brigaders.

Moreover, as noted from the very beginning, the scope of this study's findings are not limited to Scotland. The Scottish volunteers were part of much larger stories that often transcend the borders of Scotland or Britain. Theirs is the story of the International Brigades themselves – how they functioned, how they were experienced and how they succeeded and failed in living up to the ideals they sought to embody. They are the product of a global response to the rise of fascism in the 1930s, one of the most visible consequences of the emergence of anti-fascist ideas, organisations and networks, and the reaction they provoked from governments at home and abroad. They form a crucial chapter in the history of foreign fighters, with the exceptional scale of transnational mobilisation challenging historians to explain what set Spain apart. Rather than seeking to continue the stale debates surrounding celebratory and revisionist accounts, these questions will hopefully continue to animate new discussions of the International Brigades and global reactions to the Spanish Civil War.

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Appendix A

This appendix contains a simplified version of the database of Scottish International Brigade volunteers constructed as part of this project. It is intended to provide a basis for the tables presented in Chapters One to Three, but does not include all information contained in the main database, nor the various notes and supplementary information. Not all individuals have the same level of detailed information available. For entries that appeared especially uncertain, a '?' has been used to signify this. Due to the uneven and inconsistent nature of the available source material, mistakes or clashes with other lists are to be expected.

Variables measured

Personal

Surname: Surname as it most often appeared, using the most common spelling provided.

First name: As above. Middle names occasionally included if this was a key point of distinction.

Age: Age at time of arrival in Spain. Where possible, this has been calculated by comparing date of birth to date of arrival, otherwise the age given on enlistment paperwork or elsewhere has been accepted.

Location: Where the volunteer is deemed to have originated. This was often a complex decision, and the judgement made here is based on a hierarchy of evidence based on the needs of this study (see Chapter One). This is a simplified record that represents the single best point of approximation,

Affiliations

Party: Affiliation(s) to various political parties (see acronym list). If an individual was known to have previously left or been expelled from the party, this is indicated ("ex" or "exp").

Union: Known affiliations to various trades unions (see acronym list). Acronyms have been used when available, or otherwise to ensure consistency, but often only a written description (e.g. 'Boilermakers') has been given. For some acronyms given in primary sources, it has proven very difficult to establish which group is being referred to, either because the acronym was too obscure to recognise, the acronym used was not 'official' or there was a mistake made in the source itself. These entries are marked with (Unk.).

Other: Other relevant affiliations.

Spanish Service

Arrive: Date of first arrival in Spain. Some imprecision is to be expected as different sources measured different dates. For volunteers who left and later returned to Spain, the date of second arrival is not measured in this version of the database.

Depart: Date of final departure from Spain, with similar limitations as the 'Arrived' category. For volunteers who died in Spain, this is the date of their death.

Death: Whether a volunteer died in Spain, including where possible the battle they fell in.

Desertion: Whether a volunteer deserted during their time in Spain.

Capture: Whether a volunteer was taken prisoner in Spain. This covers only those made prisoners of war by the Nationalists, not by Republican authorities.

Acronyms

Political Parties

CPGB: Communist Party of Great Britain

ILP: Independent Labour Party

ISLP: International Socialist Labour Party

LLY: Labour League of Youth

LP: Labour Party

SSP: Scottish Socialist Party

SSPYM: Scottish Socialist Party Youth Movement

YCL: Young Communist League

Trades Unions

AEU: Amalgamated Engineering Union

ASW: Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers

AUBTW: Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers

CEU: Construction Engineers Union

ETU: Electrical Trades Union

FCKMU: Fife, Clackmannan and Kinross Miners' Union

LMU: Lanarkshire Miners' Union

MFGB: Miners' Federation of Great Britain

NSFU: National Sailors' and Firemen's Union

NUDAW: National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers

NUFW: National Union of Furnace Workers

NUGMW: National Union of Government and Municipal Workers

NUR: National Union of Railwaymen

NUS: National Union of Seamen

NUVB: National Union of Vehicle Builders

RCA: Railway Clerks' Association

SAU: Shop Assistants' Union

SHMA: Scottish Horse- and Motormen Association

SPS: Scottish Painters' Society

TGWU: Transport and General Workers' Union

UMS: United Mineworkers of Scotland

WLMU: West Lothian Miners' Union

Other

NUWM: National Unemployed Workers Movement

LBC: Left Book Club

Sources

This is intended as an indication of the sources available for each individual, although this should not be considered as an exhaustive list of all relevant material. For reasons of space, it is not practical to provide detailed sourcing for each entry, instead a letter code (A-K) has been given indicating which resources underpin each entry.

- A) Lists compiled by the International Brigade Association and International Brigade Memorial Trust, and other papers held at the Marx Memorial Library.
- B) Foreign Office Records (FO) held at The National Archives, Kew.
- C) Security Service Records (KV) held at The National Archives, Kew.
- D) Records of the International Brigades held at the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, Moscow (RGASPI).
- E) Papers held at the National Library of Scotland.
- F) Papers held at the People's History Museum, Manchester.
- G) Records held in the *Trabajadores* Collection, University of Warwick
- H) Oral histories, including those published by Ian MacDougall and those held in the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive and the Tameside Local Studies Archive.
- I) Records held at the Glasgow City Archives
- J) References in contemporary newspapers
- K) Records held in the *Archivo General de Guerra Civil España*

Surname	First Name	Age	Location	Party	Trade Union	Other	Occupation	Occupation 2	Arrive	Depart	Killed	Desertion	POW/s	Sources
Adam	William	29	Dundee				Coal carrier	Engineer	02-Apr-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Adamson	George	27	Kirkcaldy				Miner	.	18-Apr-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Aird	Willam	22	Edinburgh	CPGB			Shoemaker	.	03-Jan-37	02-Jun-37				ACD
Airlie	Frank	24	Bellshill				Waiter	.	22-Apr-38	30-Jul-38	Died (Gandesa)			AD
Airlie	James	47	Glasgow	CPGB			Miner	.	20-Dec-36	24-Aug-38				ACD
Aitken	George	42	Airdrie	CPGB					28-Jan-37	Sep-37				CDJ
Aitken	James	27	Glasgow				Showman	.	05-Mar-38	07-Oct-38				ABCD
Alcorn	John	27	Dundee				Labourer	.	23-Apr-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Alexander	John	35	Dundee		NUR				13-May-37	Jul-37	Died (Brunete)?			ACD
Anderson	D		Glasgow							Dec 38?				AB
Anderson	David	26	Aberdeen	CPGB (/LP?)			Chemist	.	13-Feb-37	03-Oct-38				ACDH
Anderson	James	31	Falkirk	CPGB	NUS		Seaman	.	04-Feb-37	07-Sep-38				ACDK
Anderson	Thomas	35	Glasgow	LP/ CPGB	TGWU		Rigger	.	01-Jan-37	14-Oct-38				ABCD
Anderson	Walter	29	Glasgow	CPGB (ex?)	Bricklayers		Labourer	.	30-Dec-36	07-Dec-38		Deserted		ABCD
Antrim	Frank	33	Glasgow	CPGB			Mechanic	.	02-Oct-37	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Archibald	Henry H.	33	Dunfermline				Labourer	Driver/ Painter	25-Mar-38	27-Jul-38				ACD
Arkley	James	27	Greenock	CPGB		NUWM	Seaman	.	23-Apr-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Arnour	William	34	Glasgow				Iron moulder	.	07-Feb-38	07-Dec-38			POW	ACD
Armstrong	Robert	21	Glasgow	CPGB			Surgical instrument maker	.	18-Dec-36	12-Apr-38				CD

Arnott	James	29	Renton							02-Feb-37	07-Dec-38		Deserted		ABCD
Arthur	James	32	Bathgate	CPGB			Miner	.		18-May-37	01-Sep-38				ABCDK
Ash	Francis	30	Glasgow	CPGB			Tunnel worker	.		11-Jan-38	Mar-38	Died (Aragon)	Deserted		AD
Bailey	William		Howwood							05-Jan-37	Jun-37	Died (illness)			AC
Bain	Archibald	31	Glasgow				Labourer	.		23-Jan-37	06-Jul-37		Deserted?		ACD
Ball	Robert	34	Glasgow	CPGB			Blacksmith	Boilermaker		26-Oct-37	05-Aug-38				ACD
Ballinghall	Lindsay	19	Kirkcaldy				Labourer	.		02-Jan-37	31-Aug-37		Deserted	POW	ACD
Bannerman	William	45	Musselburgh		MFGB		Miner	.		05-Jan-38	19-Aug-38				ACD
Bayley	Charles	33	Dundee	CPGB			Seaman	.		07-Apr-38	Apr-38				ACD
Beaton	Edward	31	Greenock			NUWM	Labourer	.		31-Dec-36	17-Sep-38				ACD
Beaton	John William	22	Glasgow	YCL			Swimming instructor	.		19-Feb-38	Mar-38	Died (Aragon)			ACD
Beggs	Robert	29	Clydebank	CPGB	Boilermakers	NUWM	Driller	Riveter		01-Jan-37	25-Oct-38		Deserted	POW	ACDG
Bell	William	37	Saltcoats	CPGB	TGWU		Driver	Munitions worker		01-Sep-37	14-Aug-38				ACDK
Berry	John	37	Edinburgh	CPGB		NUWM	Labourer	.		04-Feb-37	12-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			AD
Biggins	Edward	38	Cambuslang	CPGB	SSTU		Steelworker	.		23-Jan-38	Oct-38			POW	ABCD
Bingham	John	42	Edinburgh			NUWM	Labourer	.		05-Jan-37	12-Apr-38		Deserted		ACD
Bishop	William George?	35	Bellshill			NUWM (ex?)	Seaman	.		05-May-37	16-May-38		Deserted		AD
Bisset	George	23	Pitlochry	CPGB						19-Dec-36	25-May-38				ACD
Black	John	21	Glasgow							06-Dec-36	Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			AC
Blackley	Henry	32	Greenock	CPGB	Bakers		Baker	.		01-Dec-36	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Bloomfield	Tom J.	22	Kirkcaldy	CPGB		NUWM	Labourer	.		20-Dec-36	07-Dec-38			POW	ABCDH
Bonnar	Henry Andrew	39	Glasgow			NUWM	Gardener	.		14-Dec-36	Dec-36	Died (illness)			AD

Bonner	Alex	35	Glasgow					Butcher	.	23-Jan-37	27-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			ACD
Booth	Thomas	25	Paisley	CPGB				Labourer	.	16-Jan-37	07-Feb-39		Deserted	POW	ABCDH
Boyle	George	40	Glasgow	CPGB				Bricklayer	.	20-Dec-36	02-Apr-37		Deserted		ABCD
Boyle	J		Edinburgh								13-Aug-37				AD
Boyle	William	22	Dundee	CPGB				Labourer	.	04-Feb-37	05-May-37				ACD
Bradshaw	William	24	Clydebank	YCL	PO Workers			PO worker	.	01-Jan-37	10-Nov-37				ACD
Brannan	Tommy	23	Blantyre	CPGB		NUWM		Labourer	.	03-Jan-37	Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			CDH
Bridges	Robert	36	Edinburgh	ISLP?				Labourer	.	20-Dec-36	27-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			ACD
Brodie	John	33	Glasgow					Fitter	Engineer	04-Feb-38	Mar-38		Deserted		ABCD
Brolly	Dennis		Glasgow							26-Feb-38	25-Mar-38				ACD
Brown	Edward	31	Coupar	CPGB	SPS			Painter	.	13-May-37	07-Dec-38				BCDHI
Brown	Joseph	27	Glasgow		NUGMW			Miner	.	26-Oct-37	Apr-38		Deserted		ABD
Brown	William J	28	Newmilns		TGWU			Labourer	.	16-Jan-37	17-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			ACD
Bruce	John Murray	26	Alexandria	LP?	FSU (Unk.)	NUWM		Labourer	.	30-Jan-37	13-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		POW	ACD
Bruce	Walter	29	Aberdeen	LP						07-Apr-38	17-Oct-38				ABCD
Buchan	James	39	Peterhead	CPGB		NUWM		Seaman	.	21-Dec-36	18-Sep-38				ACD
Buchanan	John	22	Glasgow					Miner	.	03-Jan-37	05-May-37				ACD
Burke	Thomas	35	Glasgow					Labourer	.	27-Dec-36	Jul-37	Died (Brunete)			ACD
Burns	Dan	37	Greenock	CPGB	NUDAW	NUWM		Labourer	.	05-Feb-38	28-Oct-38			POW	BCDH
Burns	Robert	38	Kilsyth	CPGB				Miner	.	09-Jul-37	05-Aug-38				ACD
Burns	Timothy	29	Wishaw					Teacher	Salesman	21-Mar-37	10-Jul-37				ACD
Burns	Henry	35	Alva		Miners			Miner	Labourer	08-Dec-37	07-Dec-38		Deserted		ABCD

Cairns	Frank	43	Cowdenbeath	CPGB	Miners		Miner	.	20-Dec-36	22-Oct-38		Deserted		ABCD
Cairns	James	26	Cambuslang			NUWM				04-Sep-37		Deserted		ABCD
Cameron	Donald	38	Glasgow				Labourer	.	02-Jan-37	14-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			ACD
Cameron	John	42	Edinburgh	CPGB					23-Jan-37	21-Sep-38				ACD
Campbell	Archibald	17	Dalmuir		NUS		Seaman	.	17-Jul-37	30-Jul-38		Deserted		CD
Campbell	James	32	Glasgow	CPGB	AEU	NUWM	Brassfinisher	.	28-Dec-36	02-Mar-37				ACDGH
Campbell	William	30	Lumphinnans	CPGB	FCKMU		Miner	.	05-Feb-38	28-Oct-38			POW	ABCD
Carlton	John	35	Buckhaven	CPGB			Miner	Seaman	02-Jan-37	31-Aug-37				ACDK
Carmichael	Neil	36	Glasgow						13-Feb-37	12-Jun-37		Deserted?		ACD
Carr	Gabriel	36	Buckhaven				Miner	Seaman	03-Jan-37	12-Jun-37				ACD
Carson	Donald	33	Glasgow	CPGB	ASW				07-Mar-38	28-Oct-38			POW	ABCDH
Casey	Francis	53	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM	Steel erector	.	20-Dec-36	24-May-37		Deserted		ABCD
Cassidy	James	31	Glasgow	CPGB	NUFW	NUWM	Steelworker	Labourer	03-Jan-37	Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			ACD
Cassidy	Peter	32	Dundee	CPGB			Textile worker	.	04-Apr-37	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Caulfield	Hector	38	Glasgow		Plumbers	NUWM	Plumber	.	28-Dec-36	07-Sep-37				ACD
Cervantes	Geoffrey	21	Kilsyth				Mechanic	Miner	20-Jul-37	Sep-38				BD
Chalmers	James	24	Dundee	CPGB		NUWM	Engineer	.	07-Jan-37	07-Dec-38				ABCDK
Christie	Alfred	37	Aberdeen	CPGB	FSU (Unk.)	NUWM	Gardener	Steel erector	17-Oct-37	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Clarke	Joe	23	Glasgow	YCL	TGWU		Docker	.	02-Oct-37	28-Jul-38				ACD
Clarke	John	26	Glasgow				Mechanic	.	23-Apr-37					AC
Clarke	Michael	29	Greenock			NUWM	Plasterer	.	05-Feb-38	20-Oct-38			POW	BCDH
Clarke	Robert	36	Bathgate	CPGB	UMS		Miner	.	21-Aug-36	07-Oct-37				AD
Clarke	Thomas Garrow	29	Dundee	CPGB	AGTWU (Unk.)	NUWM	Labourer	.	30-Jan-37	05-Aug-38		Deserted		ABCDG K

Clunie	Robert	21	Dundee		Fishporters ?		Journalist	Weaver	26-Oct-37	07-Feb-39		POW	ABCD
Cockburn	James	25	Dundee		NUGMW		Gas fitter	.	10-Dec-36	12-Jan-37	Died (Las Rosas or Lopera)		AD
Coleman	James	24	Dundee	CPGB	Jute and Textile		Labourer	Mill worker	30-Dec-37	07-Oct-38			ABCD
Colter	John	22	Kirkcaldy			NUWM	Labourer?	.	21-Mar-37	30-Apr-37			AC
Collins	William	27	Glasgow	YCL	NUS		Seaman	.	09-Jan-38	07-Feb-39		POW	ACDH
Connelly	John	21	Glasgow	YCL			Sawmiller	.	26-Dec-36	27-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		ACDH
Conner	John	36	Glasgow	CPGB			Labourer	.	27-Dec-36	17-Sep-38			ACD
Conway	Charles	30	Clydebank				Machinist	.	30-Apr-38	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Conway	Michael	30	Cowdenbeath	CPGB			Labourer	.	07-Feb-38	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Cooney	Bob	30	Aberdeen	CPGB	SAU				02-Oct-37	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Cooper	Robert	40	Aberdeen				Labourer	.	13-Feb-37	07-Jun-38		Deserted	ACD
Cooper	Sam	33	Glasgow	CPGB (ex)		NUWM	Turner	.	09-Jan-38	27-Oct-38		POW	ABCD
Cox	Matthew	23	Dundee		SPS		Labourer	.	20-Aug-37	Mar-38	Died (Caspé)		AD
Cox	Ray		Glasgow						Oct-36	Dec-36	Died (Boadilla)		CDFJ
Coyle	John	20	Motherwell				Labourer	.	10-Dec-36	08-Jan-37			ACD
Craig	Allen	32	Glasgow			NUWM (ex)			22-Dec-36	22-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		ACDJ
Craig	Charlie	28	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM	Docker	.	22-Dec-36	21-Apr-37		Deserted	ACDJ
Craig	James	24	Glasgow	CPGB			Driver	Mechanic	23-Dec-36	13-Oct-37			ACD
Cranston	William	26	Edinburgh	CPGB			Salesman	.	18-May-37	01-Dec-38			ABCDH
Crate	John	22	New Cumnock				Engineer	.	16-Aug-37	02-Nov-37		Deserted	ABCDK

Crawford	William	40	Glasgow	CPGB (ex?)	NUS	NUWM	Pipe fitter	.	23-Jan-37	28-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		ACDH
Crawley	William	41	Greenock				Labourer	.	20-Dec-36	13-Oct-37			ACD
Croll	John	30	Dunbarton				Joiner	.	Sep-37	25-Oct-38		POW	ABCD
Crombie	Fraser	31	Kirkcaldy	CPGB	NUGMW	NUWM	Salesman	.	22-May-37	09-Jul-37	Died (Brunete)		ACD
Cruickshank	Robert	32	Glasgow	CPGB			Steelworker	.	02-Jan-37	Apr-38	Died (Gandesa)		ACD
Cullen	Hugh	22	Bathgate	LP	NUS		Seaman	.	13-Nov-37	03-May-38		Deserted	ACD
Cunningham	Charles	25	Kirkcaldy				Labourer	.	09-Apr-38	18-Apr-38			ACD
Cunningham	James	30	Glasgow	CPGB	Boilermakers	NUWM	Miner	.	23-Apr-38	28-Jul-38	Died (Gandesa)		ACD/J
Cunningham	Jock	33	Coatbridge	CPGB	MFGB	NUWM	Miner?	.	19-Oct-36	30-Aug-37			ACJ
Curley	Patrick	46	Alexandria		Boilermakers	Coop	Boilermaker	.	22-Dec-36	Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		ACD
Curran	Thomas	29	Dundee	LP			Labourer	.	03-Jan-37	21-Sep-37			ACD
Cuthbertson	Gilbert	22	Ayrshire	CPGB	ASW		Hairdresser	Carpenter	11-Nov-37	Mar-38		Deserted	CD
Dalglish	John	33	Edinburgh				Cook	.	07-Jan-37	27-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		AD
Davidson	Duncan	26	Aberdeen				Fisherman	.	30-Jul-37	11-Mar-38			ACDK
Davidson	Thomas	33	Aberdeen	CPGB	Insurance agents		Salesman	.	25-Jan-38	Apr-38	Died (Gandesa)		ACD
Davie	Adam	26	Glasgow				Driver	.	23-Jan-37	27-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		AD
Davis	Frank	41	Bellshill			NUWM	Miner	.	30-Jan-37	13-Oct-37			ACDK
Degan	George	21	Balloch	YCL					02-Apr-37	22-Jan-38	Died (Teruel)		ACD
Dennis	James	44	Glasgow	CPGB	ETU		Electrician	.	02-Aug-37	24-Oct-38		Deserted	ABCD
Dewar	Archibald	27	Aberdeen	CPGB		NUWM	Labourer	.	13-Feb-37	Mar-38	Died (Calaceite)		ACDH

Dickson	Thomas	49	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM				31-Oct-37	06-Nov-37		Deserted		ACD
Dickson	William John	26	Prestonpans				Labourer	.		18-May-37	Jul-37	Died (Brunete)			AC
Dinnen	William	40	Glasgow				Riveter	.		09-Aug-37	Jan-39				ABCD
Dixon	William	27	Airdrie		NUFW					02-Aug-37	31-Mar-38		Deserted		ACD
Docherty	David	32	Paisley			NUWM	Shipyard worker	Joiner		21-Feb-38	07-Feb-39			POW	ACD
Docherty	Frank	31	Glasgow	CPGB	TGWU					18-May-38	Jul-38	Died (Gandesa)			ACDJ
Docherty	J		Glasgow								No service				A
Doherty	Hugh	22	Port Glasgow				Metalworker	.		02-Jan-37	Apr-37		Deserted		BCDF
Dolan	John	40	Glasgow	CPGB (ex?)	TGWU	NUWM	Plasterer	.		30-Jan-37	27-Feb-37	Died (Iarama)			ACD
Donald	James	21	Methil	CPGB?			Miner	.		24-Jan-37	Jun-38	Died (Barcelona)	Deserted		ABCD
Donaldson	Alec	28	Coatbridge	CPGB	TGWU?	NUWM?	Driver	.		26-Dec-36	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Donaldson	William	27	Glasgow	CPGB	NUFW		Millwright	.		30-Jul-37	Jan-38	Died (Teruel)?			DHJ
Donnell	Stanley	34	Paisley		NUGMW	NUWM	Labourer	.		20-Sep-37	Apr-38	Died (Calaceite)			AD
Donnelly	James	25	Glasgow	ILP			Woodworker	Machinist		24-Jul-37	08-Dec-37		Deserted		ABCD
Donnelly	Thomas	32	Glasgow	CPGB?			Labourer	.		29-Jan-37	17-Sep-38				ACD
Dougan	William	19	Glasgow				Stableman	.		03-Jan-37	07-Feb-39			POW	ACD
Douglas	John	29	Glasgow			NUWM	Labourer	.		28-Dec-36	Feb-37	Died (Iarama)			AD
Dow	Thomas	32	Clydebank	CPGB		NUWM	Steel erector	.		08-Dec-37	27-Oct-38			POW	ABCD
Downie	Charles	26	Aberdeen	CPGB						06-Apr-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Doyle	James	50	East Wemyss	CPGB			Various	.		03-Jan-37	06-Jul-37		Deserted		ACD
Drever	George	28	Edinburgh	CPGB	FSU (Unk.)		Chemist	.		12-Jan-38	29-Oct-38			POW	ABCD

Drummond	Pat	33	Greenock	YCL				Labourer	.	18-Feb-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Duffy	James	22	Glasgow	YCL	NUDAW			Ostler	.	22-Jan-38	Mar/Apr-1938	Died (Aragon)			ACD
Dunbar	Alex	26	Dundee	CPGB		NUWM		Shipbuilder	.	20-Dec-36	02-Apr-38		Deserted		ACD
Dunbar	William	33	Aberdeen	CPGB				Hotel worker	Joiner	12-Mar-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Duncan	Richard	21	Clackmannan shire					Compositor	.	09-Apr-38	Sep-38	Died (illness?)			ABCD
Duncan	Thomas	23	Edinburgh	YCL (ex)				Painter	.	11-Feb-37	01-Mar-38				CD
Duncan	William	27	Newmilns							04-Apr-37	Aug 38?				ACD
Dunlop	John	23	Glasgow	CPGB				Accountant	.	22-May-37	?/09/1938				BCDHK
Dunn	Andrew	42	Greenock							11-Oct-37	07-Oct-38		Deserted		CD
Eaglesham	Hugh	34	Cambuslang	CPGB		NUWM		Steelworker	.	03-Jan-37	12-Apr-38				ACDK
Eddie	George	35	Peterhead	CPGB				Seaman	.	21-Dec-36	11-Sep-37		Deserted		ACD
Edwards	Alexander	37	Dundee	CPGB/LP				Textile worker	Machinist	02-Apr-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Elder	Alexander	24	Edinburgh					Labourer	.	02-Aug-37	02-Nov-37				CDK
Emslie	John	27	Dundee		TGWU			Driver	.	23-Jan-37	04-May-37				ACD
Evans	Edwin Arnold	37	Glasgow	CPGB (exp?)	Miners			Bookkeeper	.	02-Jan-37	15-20 Mar 1938	Died (Caspe)			ACD
Farmer	John	22	Leslie	CPGB	Miners	LBC		Miner	Painter	06-Apr-38	07-Dec-38		Deserted		ABCD
Farrell	James	35	Dundee	CPGB						07-Dec-37	07-Feb-39			POW	ACD
Farrell	Patrick	22	Glasgow					Miner	.	14-Dec-36	21-Sep-37				ACD
Ferguson	Alec	30	Stirlingshire	CPGB	MFGB	NUWM		Colliery blacksmith	.	01-May-37	07-Dec-38				CDH
Ferguson	John	46	Glasgow		Miners			Miner	.	17-Mar-37	Apr-38	Died (Ebro)			A
Ferguson	Pat	45	Alexandria	CPGB				Cook	.	14-Dec-36	20-Feb-37				ACD
Finlay	Thomas	24	Glasgow	YCL	NUR	NUWM		Turner	.	07-Jan-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Finnan	Andrew	26	Dundee					Textile worker	.	20-Dec-36	Mar-38	Died (Belchite)	Deserted		ACD

Fisher	James	23	Buckhaven		TGWU		Electrician	.	02-Aug-37	03-Feb-39		Deserted	ABCDK
Fisher	James	37	Renfrew				Miner	.	03-Jan-37	03-Apr-37			ACD
Fitsimmons	William	41	Dundee	CPGB			Marine engineer	.	13-Feb-37	07-Sep-37			ABCD
	Thomas	44	Blantyre	CPGB	Miners	NUWM			13-Feb-37	Apr-37	Died (Chimorra)		AD
Fleming	David	23	Coatbridge						01-Jan-37	23-Mar-37		Deserted	ABCDF
Fleming	Robert	42	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM	Labourer	.	20-Dec-36	29-May-37			ACD
Flynn	Thomas	26	Glasgow	YCL	AEU				Nov-36	Apr-37	Died (Chimorra)		ACDHJ
Forbes	George	20	Aberdeen				Porter	.	16-Jan-38	19-Dec-38			ABCD
Forrest	Edward	30	Edinburgh	ISLP?			Labourer	.	22-Dec-36	07-Dec-38			ABCDH K
Fox	William H	36	Blantyre	LP		NUWM	Miner	.	02-Jan-37	15-Apr-37	Died (Iarama)		CDFJ
Foyer	John	25	Alexandria	CPGB			Barber	.	25-Feb-38	07-Dec-38		Deserted	ABCD
Fraser	Hamish	23	Edinburgh	YCL	TGWU				19-Dec-36	19-Sep-38			CDEK
Fraser	Matt		Glasgow				Labourer	.	Mar-38	28-Mar-38			ACD
Fry	Harold	29	Edinburgh	CPGB	Boot and Shoe		Bootmaker	.	20-Dec-36	13-Oct-37	Died (Fuentes de Ebro)	POW	ADF
Fullarton	Steve	18	Glasgow	YCL			Engineer	.	01-Apr-38	19-Dec-38			BCDH
Galbraith	William	35	Glasgow						13-Feb-37	20-May-37			ACD
Gallagher	John	27	Glasgow			NUWM (ex)	Stoker	.	21-Nov-37	25-Oct-38		POW	ABCD
Gallagher	Thomas	20	Glasgow				Labourer	Waiter	21-Dec-36	13-Oct-37			ACD
Galligan	Frank	39	Dundee	CPGB	TGWU		Labourer	.	21-Mar-37	13-Oct-37			ACD
Garland	Peter	33	Glasgow						24-Jul-37	30-Jan-38	Died (Teruel)		ACD

Gauntlett	William	19	Glasgow	CPGB			Driller	Engineer	01-Apr-38	Jul-38	Died (Gandesa)		ABCDH
Gembles	Thomas	19	Edinburgh	LP			Driver	.	26-Mar-38	20-Apr-38			ACD
Gibbons	Danny	37	Renton	CPGB					01-Jan-37	Oct-38		POW	DHK
Gibbs	Alex	33	Aberdeen	CPGB					13-Feb-37	09-Sep-37			ACDH
Gillan	Daniel	23	Dundee	YCL	Jute and Textile		Textile worker	.	20-Dec-36	14-Jul-37			ACDHK
Gillan	George	29	Dundee						20-Dec-36	27-Oct-38		Deserted	ABCD
Gillan	Phil	23	Glasgow	YCL		NUWM			19-Sep-36	22-Feb-37			CH
Gillespie	James	27	Lumphinnans	CPGB?	FCKMU	NUWM	Rigger	.	31-Dec-36	07-Oct-38			ACDG
Gilmour	George	28	Glasgow				Clerk	.	08-Sep-37	07-Jul-38		Deserted	CD
Gilmour	John	29	Prestonpans	LP			Miner	.	20-Dec-36	12-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		AH
Gilmour	William	34	Blairstown	CPGB		NUWM	Commercial traveller	.	15-Jan-37	24-Oct-38			ABCDK
Glacken	Pat	25	Greenock	LP	Scottish Bakers		Baker	.	02-Oct-37	10-Jan-38	Died (Teruel)	Deserted	DHK
Glasse	George	31	Edinburgh	CPGB (ex)			Labourer	.	16-Jan-37	07-Feb-39		Deserted	ACD
Glavin	Jimmy	39	Glasgow	CPGB	NSFU				18-Apr-38	07-Dec-38			BDH
Glen	Robert	24	Alexandria	CPGB	NUFW		Moulder	Mechanic	18-Feb-38	Sep-38	Died (Sierra Pandols)		ABCD
Goodfellow	Charles	35	Bellshill	CPGB		NUWM	Miner	.	28-Dec-36	Jul-37	Died (Brunete)		AD
Gordon	John	23	Perth				Driver	.	21-Nov-37	28-Apr-38		Deserted	ACD
Gorman	John	23	Edinburgh	CPGB	SPS		Labourer	Cleaner	18-May-37	05-Aug-38			ACD
Gow	Robert	31	Edinburgh						03-Jan-37	14-Jun-37			ACD
Gowans	George	22	Old Cumnock	YCL	PO Workers		PO worker	.	05-Nov-37	13-Sep-38			ACD
Graham	Finlay	28	Edinburgh	CPGB	AUBTW		Architect	Bricklayer	11-Aug-37	20-Apr-38		Deserted	ACD

Graham	George Charles	25	Cambuslang		NUR		Labourer	.	21-Nov-37	16-Mar-38		Deserted		ABCD
Grant	Phillip	39	Edinburgh				Labourer	Driver		25-Oct-38			POW	ABC
Grierson	Robert	29	Dumfries	BUF (ex)		NUWM (ex)	Agricultural worker	.	04-Nov-37	Mar-38	Died (Aragon)			AD
Grossart	David	35	Glasgow	CPGB	TGWU	NUWM	Labourer	.	18-Dec-36	Apr-37	Died (Jarama)			ADF
Haig	James	29	Uddingston	CPGB (ex)		NUWM	Miner	.	02-Jan-37	17-Sep-38		Deserted		ACD
Hall	John	22	Rutherglen	YCL	NUDAW				08-Sep-37	Mar-38	Died (Belchite)			ADJ
Halligan	Andrew	26	Glasgow	YCL	AUBTW		Bricklayer	.	25-Mar-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Hamill	Thomas	27	Glasgow			NUWM			22-Dec-36	13-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			AD
Harkins	Joseph	31	Clydebank	CPGB	AEU		Mechanic	.	11-Nov-37	30-Jul-38	Died (Gandesa)			ACD
Harvey	Alex	31	Glasgow			IWW (ex)			01-Jan-37	13-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			AD
Hastie	William	52	Edinburgh	Other?			Mechanic	.	17-Dec-36	14-Jan-37				ACD
Henderson	A		Glasgow						Oct-37	23-Oct-37				A
Henderson	Arthur	22	Dunfermline		UMS		Miner	.	02-Oct-37	27-Oct-38			POW	ABCD
Henderson	David	43	Glasgow				Fireman	.	03-Jan-37	Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			AD
Henderson	Richard	33	Kirkcaldy				Labourer	Plasterer	07-Mar-38	Apr-38	Died (Aragon)			ACDH
Henderson	William	36	Airdrie	CPGB			Steelworker	.	06-Nov-37	25-Oct-38			POW	ABCD
Hepburn	Henry Andrew?	29	Dundee			NUWM			20-Dec-36	07-Sep-37				ACD
Hepper	Thomas	28	Glasgow		MFGB		Miner	.	20-Dec-36	13-Oct-37				ACD
Hewlett	William	28	Edinburgh	CPGB	NUS	NUWM	Seaman	.	16-Jul-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Hillock	Andrew	19	Kirkcaldy				Baker	.	07-Jan-37	Jul-37	Died (illness)			AD

Holland	Joeseeph	26	Cambuslang	CPGB						26-Oct-36	Sep-37					ACDF
Hollywood	John	23	Alexandria				Labourer	.		03-Jan-37	09-Sep-37					AD
Howie	Thomas	27	Glencraig	CPGB	UMS	NUWM	Miner	Engineer		05-Feb-37	07-Dec-38	Deserted				ABCDK
Hughes	Allan	26	Blantyre	CPGB	TGWU	NUWM	Labourer	.		01-Sep-37	19-Dec-38					ABCDK
Hughes	Edward	23	Glasgow				Radio mechanic	.		12-Jan-38	07-Feb-39			POW		ACD
Hughes	Joseph	33	Glasgow	CPGB (exp?)	NBA (Unk.)		Labourer	.		18-May-38	22-Oct-38		Deserted			BCDH
Hughes	Thomas	20	Cambuslang	CPGB	NUDAW	NUWM	Butcher	.		18-Mar-38	24-Aug-38					CDH
Hunter	John	24	Edinburgh				Labourer	.		19-Dec-36	31-May-37			POW		ACD
Hunter	William Dykes	24	Glasgow	YCL (exp)	ASW		Carpenter	.		12-Jan-38	Mar-38	Died (Aragon)				AD
Hyman	Charles	24	Greenock			NUWM (ex)	Street trader	.		19-Dec-36	Mar-37	Died (Jarama)				AF
Hyndman	James		Glasgow	CPGB/YCL							12-Jan-37	Died (Las Rozas)				AJ
Inglis	John	27	Glasgow				Steelworker	.		23-Jan-37	12-May-37		Deserted			ACD
Jackson	George	35	Cowdenbeath		FCKMU		Bricklayer	.		05-Feb-38	19-Aug-38	Died (Sierra Pandols)				ACD
Jackson	William	42	Glasgow	CPGB			Miner	.		19-Feb-37	31-Aug-38					ACD
Jarvis	John	27	Kirkcaldy	CPGB			Storekeeper	.		23-Jan-37	12-May-37		Deserted			ACD
Johnston	Harry	34	Dundee	CPGB		NUWM	Textile worker	.		21-Dec-36	13-Oct-37		Deserted			ACD
Justice	James	31	Dornoch							24-Feb-37	Apr-38					ACD
Kane	Thomas	17	Paisley	YCL			Salesman	.		07-Feb-38	07-Dec-38					ABCD
Keddie	Robert	37	Glasgow	CPGB	AEU		Engineer	.		30-Jan-37	21-Sep-37					CDG
Keegan	George	19	Glasgow	YCL	TGWU		Motor driver	.		03-Jan-37	28-Sep-37		Deserted			BCDF
Keegan	William	27	Glasgow	CPGB	LMU	NUWM	Miner	.		20-Dec-36	Jul-37	Died (Villaneuva de la Canada)				ACDG

Kelly	George	27	Greenock		CEU	NUWM	Steel erector	.	25-Mar-38	Jul-38	Died (Ebro)			BCD
Kelly	William	32	Glasgow	CPGB			Crane driver	.	28-Jan-38	07-Feb-39			POW	ACDH
Kelter	William	22	Glasgow				Various	.	05-Nov-37	Mar-38	Died (Gandesa)			ABD
Kemp	Alex		Port Glasgow						Oct-37	20-Jan-38	Died (executed)	Deserted		ADK
Kempton	James	38	Cockenzie				Miner	.	20-Dec-36	11-Oct-38		Deserted		ABCD
Kennedy	David C.	27	Greenock	LP	Boilermakers		Painter	.	25-Feb-38	07-Feb-39			POW	ACD
Kennedy	John	33	Edinburgh				Bricklayer	.	30-Jan-37	18-Dec-37		Deserted		ABCD
Kenny	Thomas	28	Glasgow				Painter	Tailor	23-Jan-37	13-Oct-37				ACD
Kermode	James	33	Airdrie	CPGB	NUGMW		Quarryman	.	10-Dec-36	12-Jan-37	Died (Las Rozas)			ACD
Kerr	Thomas	23	Airdrie	CPGB?	BDU (Unk.)				15-Dec-37	18-Sep-38				ACD
Kerrigan	Peter	37	Glasgow	CPGB	AEU		Engineer	.	May-38	Oct-38				ACDHI
Kyle	Hugh William	19	Glasgow	CPGB?			Metalworker	Painter	11-Feb-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Lamb	James	28	Alloa	CPGB	TGWU		Driver	.	16-Aug-37	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Laughran	James	22	Motherwell		CEU		Driver	.	10-Dec-36	31-Mar-37				ACD
Learmouth	James	21	Motherwell						06-Dec-36	28-Sep-37				ACD
Leet	George	28	Glasgow	CPGB	Bakers				20-Dec-36	13-Jul-37				ACDGH
Legge	Walter	34	Rosyth							28-Oct-38			POW	ABCD
Linden	Maurice	21	Giffnock	CPGB			Journalist	.	18-Jan-37	03-Apr-37				CD
Lobban	John	32	Alexandria		FSU (Unk.)	NUWM	Carpenter	.	30-Jan-37	Sep-38	Died (Sierra Caballs)	Deserted		AD
Lochore	John	24	Glasgow	YCL	NUS	NUWM	Seaman	.	18-Dec-36	02-Apr-37				CDH
Lomax	Richard Kenneth	33	Glasgow	CPGB			Seaman	.	14-Jan-37	17-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)			AD
Londragon	John	25	Aberdeen	CPGB	SHMA	NUWM	Labourer	.	13-May-37	05-Jul-38				ACD

Louden	Evan	29	Kirkcaldy		UMS		Miner	.	21-Mar-37	07-Dec-38		Deserted	ABCD
Lynch	John	19	Glasgow	CPGB (/SSP?)			Nurseryman	.	03-Jan-37	09-Sep-37			ACD
Lyons	James	26	Glasgow	CPGB	AEU	NUWM	Marine engineer	.	28-Dec-36	Feb-37	Died (Iarama)		ACD
MacFarquhar	Roderick	28	Glasgow	LP	RCA				19-Jan-37	Sept 38?			CH
Mackenzie	David		Edinburgh							05-Jan-37			CEJ
Mackie	Walter	25	Kirkcaldy	CPGB	NUGMW		Labourer	.	23-Jan-37	29-May-37			ACD
MacRae	William	34	Glasgow	CPGB	TGWU		Tinsmith	.	29-Jan-37	13-Oct-37			CD
Malcolm	John		Glasgow							24-Jun-37			ACD
Malcolm	Robert	36	Perth	CPGB			Engineer	.	13-Feb-37	24-Jul-37			ACD
Maley	Jimmy	28	Glasgow	CPGB			Metalworker ?	.	03-Jan-37	31-May-37		POW	CHJ
Manzie	George		Dundee		Jute and Textile				21-Mar-37	30-Apr-37			AC
Marcovitch	Alec	23	Glasgow	CPGB	Tailor and Garments		Clothing cutter	.	02-Oct-37	14-Feb-39			AD
Marshall	Andrew	26	Edinburgh				Textile worker	.	20-Dec-36	14-Jan-37			ACD
Marshall	James	29	Clydebank	CPGB	Plasterers		Slater	.	11-Jan-38	Mar-38	Died (Aragon)		ADJ
Martin	(T.?) Robert	23	Stevenston				Munitions worker	.	02-Jun-37	Aug-37			AD
Mason	Robert	26	Edinburgh	YCL/ CPGB	GMGU (Unk.)	NUWM	Floor maker	.	30-Jan-37	27-Feb-37	Died (Iarama)		ACD
Mathiers	Edward	35	Dundee	CPGB		NUWM	Millworker	.	21-Dec-36	17-Jul-37			ACDK
Mathieson	?		Clydebank							28-Jun-37			AD
Maxwell	Peter	51	Dundee				Kitchenman	.	20-Dec-36	17-Jul-37			ACD
McAllister	Andrew	42	Newton	CPGB	LMU	NUWM	Miner	.	03-Jan-37	17-Jul-37		Deserted	ACD

McAnaw	Tom	29	Motherwell					NUWM	Labourer	.	20-Dec-36	20-Apr-37		Deserted		ABCD
McAulay	William	31	Glasgow	CPGB	NUS			NUWM	Seaman	.	27-Dec-36	16-Sep-38				ACD
McAuslan	David	25	Glasgow	YCL				NUWM			23-Jan-37	22-Oct-38		Deserted		BCD
McBride	Edward	34	Greenock		TGWU/FSU				Docker	.	23-Jan-37	24-Aug-37				CDG
McCabe	Frank		Dundee								13-Dec-36	Aug-37	Died (Quinto)			ACD
McCafferty	Bernard	22	Banffshire						Engineer	.	21-Nov-37	Mar-38	Died (Aragon)			ACD
McCartney	Garry (William)	28	Glasgow	CPGB	NUVB				Blacksmith	.	30-Jul-37	09-Feb-39			POW	ADEH
McCartney	Wilfred		Scotland								Nov-36	17-Feb-37				CH
McCaskill	Henry	28	Cowdenbeath	CPGB				NUWM	Miner	.	18-Apr-38	04-Aug-38				ACD
McCleod	Charles Daniel	30	Aberdeen						Labourer	.	18-Apr-38	Aug-38	Died (Sierra Pandols)			AD
McColl	John	36	Glasgow	CPGB					Boilermaker	.	21-Feb-38	Feb-39				AD
McColl	Thomas	31	Glasgow	CPGB				NUWM	Labourer	Butcher	09-Apr-38	07-Dec-38				BCD
McCormack	Eddie	25	Glasgow	CPGB							30-Apr-38	07-Dec-38			POW	ABCDE
McCormick	Charles	22	Glencraig		FCKMU/U MS				Miner	.	23-Jan-37	07-Dec-38				BCDG
McCulloch	Frederick	26	Glasgow						Builder	Labourer	02-Aug-37	13-16 October 1937	Died (Fuentes de Ebro)			AD
McCusker	Frank	30	Dundee	CPGB (ex)				NUWM	Labourer	.	21-Mar-37	25-May-38				ACDH
McDade	Alex	32	Glasgow	CPGB	TGWU			NUWM	Hammerman	.	27-Dec-36	06-Jul-37	Died (Brunete)			DHJK
McDade	William	39	Dundee					NUWM			20-Dec-36	18-Aug-37				CD
McDermott	George	26	Glasgow	YCL (ex?)	SPS				Painter	.	02-Aug-37	25-May-38				CDK
McDonald	Alister	25	Edinburgh						Labourer	.	02-Aug-37	02-Nov-37				CDK

McDonald	Angus	30	Dundee				Nurse	.	02-Jan-37	Apr-37		Deserted	ACD]
McDonald	John	44	Paisley	Boilermakers			Boilemaker	.	07-Oct-37	13-Aug-38			CD
McDonald	Robert		Glasgow						09-May-37	31-May-37	Died (SS City of Barcelona)		A
McDonald	Sam	30	Alexandria	CPGB	NUR		Blacksmith	.	15-Nov-36	Feb-37			AD
McDougall	William	32	Glasgow	CPGB	Boxers?		Labourer	.	21-Dec-36	Nov-37			ACD
McElroy	James	34	Wishaw	CPGB	NUR				20-Dec-36	15-May-37	Died (Iarama)		ACD
McEwan	Daniel	48	Alexandria		Dyers and Bleachers		Engineer	.	22-Dec-36	19-Jun-39		POW	ACDG
McEwan	John	25	Dundee	YCL			Timber yard worker	.	23-Jan-37		Died		ACD
McGarva	David	31	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM (ex)	Baker	.	26-Dec-36	27-Oct-38		POW	ABCD
McGaw	John	26	Glasgow	CPGB	NUFW		Iron moulder	.	01-Sep-37	06-May-38		Deserted	ACD
McGillivray	Hugh	36	Glasgow	CPGB	NUGMW		Iron driller	Painter	12-Jan-38	07-Feb-39		POW	ABCD
McGoochan	Luke	19	Edinburgh	LP	NUS		Miner	.	13-Nov-37	25-Oct-38		POW	ABCD
McGovern	Bernard		Glasgow										DE
McGregor	Donald	27	Alexandria	CPGB	AEU		Engineer	.	12-Jan-38	25-Oct-38		POW	BCDH
McGregor	William	36	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM	Labourer	.	22-Dec-36	20-Feb-38			ABCDK
McGuire	Robert	16	Dundee	CPGB	CPGB		Labourer	.	09-Dec-36	Apr-37			ACD
McGuire	Thomas	22	Greenock	YCL					26-Feb-38	Feb 39?		POW	ACDH
McGuire	Thomas	48	Glasgow				Labourer	.	27-Dec-36	Feb-37		Deserted	ACD
McGuire	William	22	Dundee	YCL	SAU		Driver	.	30-Jan-37	28-Feb-37	Died (Iarama)		ACDGH
McHugh	James	29	Dundee		NSFU	NUWM	Seaman	.	10-Dec-37	Mar-38	Died (Gandesá)		ABD
McInnes	Robert	35	Edinburgh	CPGB			Nurse	.	09-Dec-36	08-Mar-37			ACD
McIntyre	John	29	Bathgate	CPGB	WLMU		Miner	.	12-Jan-38	04-Dec-38			ABCD

McKay	Alexander	29	Kirkcaldy	CPGB		NUWM	Labourer	.	Apr-37	07-Dec-38				ABCD
McKay	David	22	Milngavie	YCL	TGWU		Butcher	.	22-Jan-38	Apr-38	Died (Gandesa)			ACD
McKeag	John	24	Glasgow				Steelworker	.	27-Dec-37	01-Jul-37				ACD
McKeefrey	Jimmy	25	Glasgow						29-Apr-38	07-Dec-38				BCDE
McKenzie	David		Glasgow							Mar-38	Died (Aragon)			A
McKenzie	Edward Ward	22	Glasgow	YCL			Steeplejack	.	25-Feb-38	Apr-38	Died (Aragon)		POW	ACD
McKeown	Andrew	37	Glasgow			NUWM			13-Feb-37	Jul-37	Died (Brunete)			AD
McKissock	James	33	Glasgow	CPGB	TGWU		Miner	.	10-Dec-36	Apr-37	Died (Accident)			AD
McLander	Alex	35	Dundee				Labourer	.	02-Apr-38	07-Dec-38				BCD
McLanders	John	36	Dundee				Salesman	.	03-Jan-37	Apr-37	Died (Jarama)			ACD
McLaughlan	David	22	Glasgow	CPGB			Salesman	.	28-Jan-38	25-Apr-38		Deserted		AC
McLaughlin	Frank	31	Wishaw				Miner	.	20-Dec-37	07-Feb-39			POW	ACD
McLaughlin	William? P.		Scotland						13-Dec-36	20-Jul-37				ACD
McLean	Charles Arthur	31	Dundee		AEU		Engineer	.	29-Jan-37	07-Dec-38				BCD
McLean	John	27	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM	Steelworker	.	28-Jan-38	07-Dec-38		Deserted		BCD
McLean	Robert	22	Glasgow	YCL	SPS		Painter	.	04-Feb-38	07-Dec-38		Deserted		BCD
McLeavie	John	37	Glasgow				Music Hall Artist	.	02-Aug-37	08-Nov-37				ACDK
McLennagan	John	36	Greenock	CPGB		NUWM	Labourer	Tailor	18-Feb-38	Sep-38	Died (illness?)			ABCD
McLennan	James	22	Greenock	CPGB					20-Dec-36	13-Jun-37				CD
McLennan	William	25	Greenock	CPGB	TGWU		Shoemaker	Painter	05-Feb-38	07-Dec-38		Deserted		BCD
McLerie	Andrew	30	Glasgow			NUWM	Labourer	.	28-Dec-36	07-Sep-37				CDF

McMenemy	Alec	38	Glasgow					Labourer	.	28-Dec-36	12-Apr-38				CDK
McMorrow	James	35	Glasgow					Labourer	.	16-Jan-38	10-17 March 1938	Died (Aragon)			ABD
McMullan	William	22	Bellshill	CPGB				Flatter	.	02-Aug-37	20-Jan-38	Died (Teruel?)			AD
McPhail	Alex	39	Burnbank					Miner	Machinist	12-Mar-37	19-Sep-37				CD
McPherson	John	30	Cowdenbeath	CPGB	Scottish miners			Driver	.	14-Feb-38	06-Jul-38				ACD
McQuade	Edward	27	Glasgow					Labourer	.	22-Dec-36	21-Apr-37				AD
McQuade	James	25	Glasgow			NUWM		Labourer	.	22-Dec-36	Apr-37				ACDF
McWhirter	Tom	32	Glasgow	CPGB				Woodworker	.	03-Jan-37	Mar-38	Died (Caspe)			ACD
Meek	William	28	Glasgow	CPGB?						17-Oct-37	14-Feb-39		Deserted		CDK
Meihlen	Ralph	37	Glasgow							22-Dec-36	Jan-37				AC
Menzies	Alec	32	Paisley	CPGB	TGWU			Butcher	Driver	16-Jan-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Menzies	David	23	Dundee	CPGB				Driver	.	02-Oct-37	10-Jan-38				BCD
Menzies	John	28	Glasgow	CPGB							07-Dec-38				BCD
Meredith	William	23	Glasgow	CPGB	NUGMW			Labourer	.	03-Jan-37	06-Jul-37	Died (Villanueva de la Canada)			AD
Messer	Martin		Glasgow	YCL		NUWM					Dec-36	Died (Boadilla)			ACJ
Middleton	Robert	41	Glasgow	CPGB (exp)	TGWU	NUWM (ex)		Shipbuilder	Steelworker	18-Dec-36	07-Dec-38		Deserted		BCD
Miller	Gavin	23	Stirling	LP	MFGB (ex)			Driver	.	11-Dec-37	05-Apr-38		Deserted		ACD
Miller	James 'Dusty'	26	Glasgow	YCL				Marine engineer	.	09-Jan-38	31-Mar-38	Died (Calaceite?)			ABCD
Miller	James/Jasper	21	Alexandria	YCL?	TGWU			Driver	.	06-Dec-36	19-Dec-38		Deserted		BC
Miller	John	44	Alexandria	CPGB				Miller	Engineer	30-Jan-37	19-Jun-37		Deserted		CDF
Milne	John	23	Glasgow	YCL	NUDAW			Flesher	.	26-Oct-37	07-Dec-38				ABD

Milton	Robert	20	Isle of Arran	YCL	PO Workers		PO worker	.	05-Nov-37	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Mitchell	Thomas P	20	Edinburgh				Boilerman	.	02-Oct-37	07-Dec-38			ABD
Moir	James	22	Perth	CPGB			Electrician	.	04-Jun-37	Jul-37	Died (Brunete)		ACD
Montgomery	John	23	Glasgow	YCL			Warehouse	.	03-Jan-37	31-May-37		POW	ACD
Mooney	Daniel	48	Glasgow	CPGB			Driver	.	22-Dec-36	18-Sep-37		Deserted	ACD
Morrice	Kenneth Edward	22	Aberdeen	CPGB	NUS		Seaman	.	12-Mar-38	02-Aug-38	Died (Gandesa)		ACD
Morrison	Alexander	45	Glasgow				Labourer	.	03-Jan-37	01-Jul-37			ACD
Moses	William Stewart	27	Airdrie	CPGB	AUBTW		Plumber	.	01-May-37	07-Dec-38			CD
Mowatt	David W. C.	28	Friockheim	CPGB	NUR/RCA		Railway clerk	.	Oct-36	Sep-37			ACD
Mudie	John D	21	Dundee	LP/CPGB?			Textile worker	Driver	04-Feb-37	Mar-38	Died (Caspe)	Deserted	BDG
Munro	Alexander	24	Edinburgh	CPGB			Labourer	.	09-Apr-38	23-Apr-38			ACD
Murch	John	31	Glasgow		NUWM		Driver	.	26-Oct-37	28-Oct-38		POW	ABCD
Murdoch	Forbes	35	Aberdeen				Tinsmith	Hand driller	17-Oct-37	12-Apr-38		Deserted	ACD
Murphy	James Patrick	23	Glasgow	SSPYM			Labourer	.	03-Jan-37	Mar-38	Died (Caspe)		ABCD
Murphy	Matthew	38	Glasgow				Miner	.	04-Feb-38	10-Feb-38			ABCD
Murray	Annie	26	Edinburgh	CPGB			Nurse		Sep-36	1939			ADEH
Murray	George	31	Glasgow		NUWM				27-Dec-36	27-Feb-37			CD
Murray	George William	26	Glasgow	CPGB	Scottish Typographers		Printer	.	15-May-37	07-Dec-38			BCDHI K
Murray	James	39	Dundee	CPGB	AEU		Engineer	.	27-Dec-36	08-Jun-37			ACD
Murray	James	30	Glasgow						20-Sep-37	Mar-38	Died (Caspe)		ABD

Murray	John		Glasgow	CPGB						23 Jan 37?	02-Feb-37				ACD
Murray	Joseph	40	Glasgow	CPGB			Canvasser	.		25-Dec-36	15-Oct-37				CDK
Murray	Tom	38	Edinburgh	LP/ CPGB	AWU (Unk.)		Secretary	.		19-Apr-38	09-Sep-38				ACD
Murray	William	27	Glasgow	CPGB			Labourer	.		27-Dec-36	Jul-37	Died (Brunete)			AD
Neilson	Walter	24	Paisley				Electrician	.		23-Dec-37	29-Apr-38		Deserted		AD
Ness	John Bruce	31	Dundee	CPGB			Steel erector	.		05-Nov-37	26-Jul-38	Died (Gandesa)			ACD
Nicholson	Thomas	34	Glasgow				Labourer	.		02-May-37	02-Nov-37				AD
Nicoll	Arthur	34	Dundee	CPGB	FCKMU/ SAU	NUWM	Clerk	.		18-May-37	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Nicoll	Peter	33	Dundee	CPGB						17-Oct-37	16-Sep-38				CD
Nimmo	John	19	Blantyre		SPS		Painter	.		21-Nov-37	01-Apr-38		Deserted		AD
Nolan	John	43	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM	Steeplejack	.		18-Dec-36	07-Sep-37				ACD
O'Connell	John	22	Glasgow	YCL		NUWM	Plasterer	.		03-Jan-37	07-Dec-38		Deserted		ABCDH
O'Hanlon	Harry	26	Rutherglen	CPGB		NUWM	Hairdresser	.		24-Apr-37	07-Dec-38				ABCD
O'Hara	Hugh	38	Airdrie							20-Dec-36	21-Sep-37				ACDK
O'Neill	Charles	36	Glasgow	CPGB	SHMA	NUWM				20-Dec-36	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Palmer	Charles	38	Glasgow				Labourer	.		08-Aug-37	22-Oct-38		Deserted		ACD
Park	Alec	38	Glasgow	CPGB	AEU		Engineer	.		12-Jan-38	12-Mar-38	Died (Aragon)			ACDI
Parker	John	34	Dundee	CPGB		NUWM	Salesman	.		03-Jan-37	21-Mar-37		Deserted		ACD
Parlett	William	26	Glasgow	CPGB						01-Jan-37	25-Oct-38			POW	ADK
Paterson	John	37	Edinburgh	CPGB?			Turner	.		24-Jul-37	24-May-38				ACDK
Paterson	John		Dundee								no service				AC
Paterson	Puller	33	Glasgow	CPGB	SHMA		Driver	.		20-Dec-36	14-Aug-38		Deserted		ACD
Pattison	John Ewing		Bellshill	CPGB			Journalist	.		Jan-37	07-Sep-37				ACD
Penman	John	29	Cardenden	CPGB	MFGB		Miner	.		21-Nov-37	Dec 38?			POW	ACD

Phillips	Alexander	17	Paisley	YCL			Window dresser	.	04-Feb-38	14-Feb-38			ACD
Phillips	George	33	Dundee				Labourer	.	23-Apr-38	07-Dec-38			ABC
Plain	David	29	Glasgow				Cinema worker	.	19-Feb-37	17-Oct-38		POW	ABCD
Pollock	James	25	Glasgow	CPGB	NUC		Clerk	.	20-Mar-38	07-Feb-39		POW	ADE
Poustie	George	28	Dundee	CPGB	AUBTW		Bricklayer	.	21-Mar-37	27-Oct-38		POW	ABCDK
Prior	J		Glasgow							no service			A
Queen	James	26	Airdrie				Labourer	.	02-Aug-37	14-Feb-39	Deserted		ABCDK
Quinn	Sydney	27	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM			30-Nov-36				CD
Quinn	Thomas J	29	Wishaw	CPGB	TGWU	NUWM	Miner	.	11-Nov-37	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Rae	James	27	Glasgow	YCL			Labourer	.	28-Dec-36	Feb-37	Died (Iarama)		ADJ
Ray	David	34	Glasgow			NUWM	Furnaceman	.	27-Dec-36	14-Sep-37			ACD
Ray	William	24	Lossiemouth	CPGB	TMWU		Sheet metal worker	.	22-Apr-38	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Reid	Alex	42	Aberdeen		Boilermakers		Boilermaker	.	26-Oct-37	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Reid	Jimmy	34	Glasgow	CPGB			Miner	.	29-Apr-37	12-Dec-38			ABCD
Reid	Thomas	29	Glasgow				Labourer	Carter	24-Apr-37	03-Feb-39			ABCD
Renton	Donald	24	Edinburgh	CPGB	TGWU	NUWM	Painter	.	20-Dec-36	31-Mar-37		POW	ACDH
Riddell	John	34	Glasgow		TGWU	NUWM	Seaman	.	23-Jan-37	Sep-37	Died (Brunete)		ACD
Riggans	William	27	Wishaw	CPGB			Gas worker	.	20-Dec-36	15-May-37	Deserted		ABCD
Riley	Francis	22	Glasgow	CPGB			Steelworker	.	18-May-37	17-Sep-38	Deserted		ACD
Riley	John	18	Glasgow				Labourer	.	30-Jul-37	19-Jan-38	Died (Teruel)		CDH
Ritchie	John	47	Aberdeen						10-Jan-37	23-Aug-37			CH
Robertson	George	23	Edinburgh	YCL			Mechanic	Driver	13-Nov-36	07-Oct-38			ABCD

Robertson	James	21	Edinburgh	YCL				Hydro attendant	.	18-May-37	07-Dec-38		Deserted		ABCDK
Roddy	Bernard Michael	29	Uddingston					Driver	.	28-Dec-36	28-Dec-37		Deserted		AD
Rodgers	Henry	38	Shotts		LMU	NUWM		Miner	.	06-Jan-37	07-Dec-38		Deserted		ABCD
Ross	H. Clunie		Dunbarton								07-Dec-38				AB
Ross	John McCleod	23	Edinburgh	CPGB				Clerk	.	13-Nov-37	17-Mar-38	Died (Belchite or Caspe)			ABCD
Rush	Frank	32	Glasgow	CPGB	TGWU	NUWM		Labourer	.	27-Dec-36	30-May-37		Deserted		ABCD
Russell	John	32	Edinburgh	CPGB				Mechanic	Hairdresser	11-Feb-37	02-Nov-37				ACD
Rutherford	James	19	Edinburgh	YCL						20-Dec-36	Apr-38	Died (Executed as POW)		POW	ABCD
Ryce	Edward	30	Airdrie	CPGB				Driver	.	16-May-37	19-Apr-38		Deserted		AD
Sampson	Joseph	32	New Stevenston					Painter	.	05-Mar-38	Feb-39				ACD
Samson	David	29	Dundee		SAU			Shop assistant	.	18-May-37	Jul-37	Died (Brunete)			AD
Sanderson	Frank	21	Glasgow	YCL				Porter	.	23-Jan-38	07-Dec-38				ABCD
Sawyer	Robert		Glasgow							Dec-36	20-Feb-37				ACFK
Scott	Charles	21	Glasgow					Waiter	.	02-Aug-37	02-Nov-37				CDK
Shaw	Andrew	38	Glasgow	CPGB	ASW					12-Jan-38	07-Dec-38				ABDG
Shaw	George	38	Glasgow	CPGB	TGWU	NUWM		Driver	Joiner	03-Jan-37	14-Dec-37				CDG
Shields	Barney	37	Clydebank	CPGB				Mechanic	.	01-Sep-37	Mar-38	Died (Caspe)	Deserted		DE
Shields	Joseph	31	Glasgow					Labourer	.	23-Jan-37	Feb-37	Died (Iarama)			AD
Shields	Robert	25	Glasgow	YCL		NUWM				30-Dec-37	Sep-38	Died (Sierra Caballs)			AD
Sim	Ernest	23	Aberdeen					Labourer	.	23-Oct-37	Sep-38	Died (Sierra Caballs)			AD

Simpson	Robert	38	Aberdeen	CPGB	SAU	NUWM	Butcher	.	17-Oct-37	07-Feb-39		POW	ACD
Sloan	Hugh	25	Methil	CPGB	UMS/ FCKMU	NUWM	Miner	.	18-May-38	07-Dec-38			ABCDH
Sloan	Thomas	36	Glasgow				Salesman	Joiner	11-Feb-38	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Sloss	Andrew	29	Glasgow				Clerk	.	07-Jan-37	24-Aug-37			ABCD
Smart	R		Dalmuir							No service			A
Smith	Albert	34	Aberdeen				Driver	.	05-Mar-38	05-May-38	Deserter		ABCD
Smith	Andrew William	27	Dalmuir				Engineer	Labourer	20-Dec-37	07-Dec-38			ABD
Smith	Christopher	22	Rutherglen	YCL	SAU		Clerk	.	13-May-37	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Smith	David	27	Glasgow	CPGB?			Seaman	.	03-Jan-37	21-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		AD
Smith	George	25	Methil	CPGB?	UMS		Miner	.	04-Jan-37	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Smith	Henry	19	Dundee	CPGB?					20-Dec-36	07-Feb-37			ACD
Smith	John	31	Irvine	CPGB	MFGB	NUWM	Miner	.	04-Jan-37	Sep-38	Died (Sierra Caballs)		ACDG
Smith	John Milne	35	Aberdeen						29-Mar-38				ABCD
Smith	Malcolm	26	Dundee	CPGB	Scottish Bakers		Baker	.	23-Sep-37	19-Aug-38	Died (Sierra Pandols)		AD
Smith	Robert	29	Kirkcaldy	CPGB	NUS		Seaman	.	02-Jan-37	10-Apr-38			ACDG
Sneddon	Malcolm	23	Methil	CPGB			Miner	.	23-Jan-37	07-Dec-38	Deserted		ABCD
Sowerly	George	24	Edinburgh	CPGB						Jan-37			AD
Sparkes	William	23	Glasgow	CPGB			Roadworker	.	04-Dec-37	06-Jul-38	Deserted		ACD
Stalker	Alexander Ken		Dundee	CPGB					10-Dec-36	12-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		ACD
Stark	George	41	Glasgow	CPGB		NUWM	Riveter	Labourer	03-Jan-37	01-Jul-37			ACD
Steel	George	28	Dundee			NUWM?	Physical training instructor	.	04-Apr-37	Aug-37	Deserted		ABCD

Steele	John	42	Falkirk					Telegraphist	.	18-Dec-36	May-37	Died (air raid)		AD
Stevenson	Robert	47	Alexandria	CPGB		NUWM		Labourer	.	27-Dec-36	20-Jul-37			ACD
Stevenson/Stevensky	Joe	28	Bellshill	CPGB		NUWM		Miner	.	13-May-37	Feb-38	Died (illness)		BDH
Stewart	Guy		Balingry											A
Stewart	R		Edinburgh								Dec 38?			AB
Stirling	Charles	25	Glasgow	CPGB				Groom	.	14-Dec-36	Sep-37			AD
Stirrat	David	21	Glasgow	YCL				Driver	Mechanic	13-Oct-37	07-Dec-38		Deserted	BCDH
Storrie	John	29	Edinburgh	CPGB		NUWM		Labourer	.	03-Jan-37	21-Sep-37			CD
Strachan	Henry	41	Cambuslang							13-Feb-37	26-Aug-37			ACD
Sullivan	James	24	Rutherglen					Labourer	.	13-May-37	Jul-38	Died (Gandesa)		ABDH
Sullivan	Michael	34	Dundee	CPGB	TGWU	NUWM		Labourer	.	02-Oct-37	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Sutherland	Colin	21	Glasgow					Labourer	.	18-Apr-38	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Sutherland	Walter	30	Glasgow					Labourer	.	05-Jan-38	31-Oct-38		POW	ACD
Tadden	William John	35	Dundee			NUWM				22-Dec-36	27-Feb-37	Died (Jarama)		AD
Thompson	Percy	29	Edinburgh	CPGB	AUBTW			Plumber	.	16-Aug-37	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Toal	Patrick	21	Glasgow	YCL				Salesman	.	14-Dec-36	07-Apr-38			ACD
Travers	John	34	Newton					Labourer	.	03-Jan-37	19-Dec-38			ABCD
Tunnah	John	20	Edinburgh	CPGB	PO Workers			PO worker	.	30-Jan-37	16-Oct-37			ACD
Walker	John Leith	40	Glasgow	LP	TGWU			Engineer	.	05-Aug-37	07-Dec-38			ABCD
Walker	Michael	47	Bellshill	CPGB	Scottish Miners			Miner	.	27-Dec-36	15-Oct-37			ACD
Walker	Robert S.	25	Edinburgh	CPGB	AEU			Clerk	.	28-Mar-37	07-Dec-38			ABCDK
Walshe	Peter James	19	Glasgow					Packer	.	02-Jan-37	11-Feb-38			ACD
Wark	James	36	Airdrie					Labourer	.	04-Jan-37	Mar-37	Died (Jarama)		ACD